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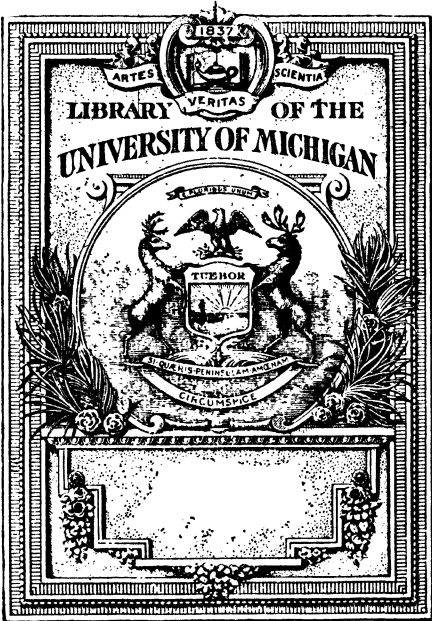
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FOR MEN AND WOMEN

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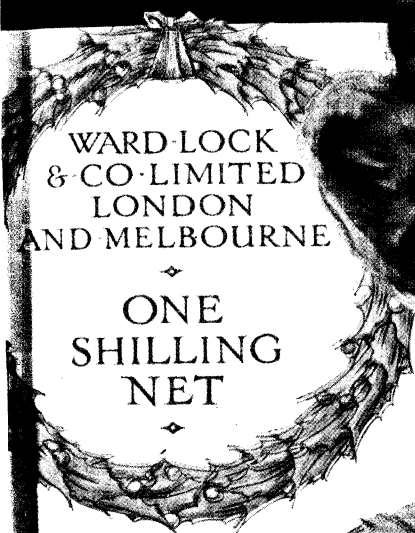
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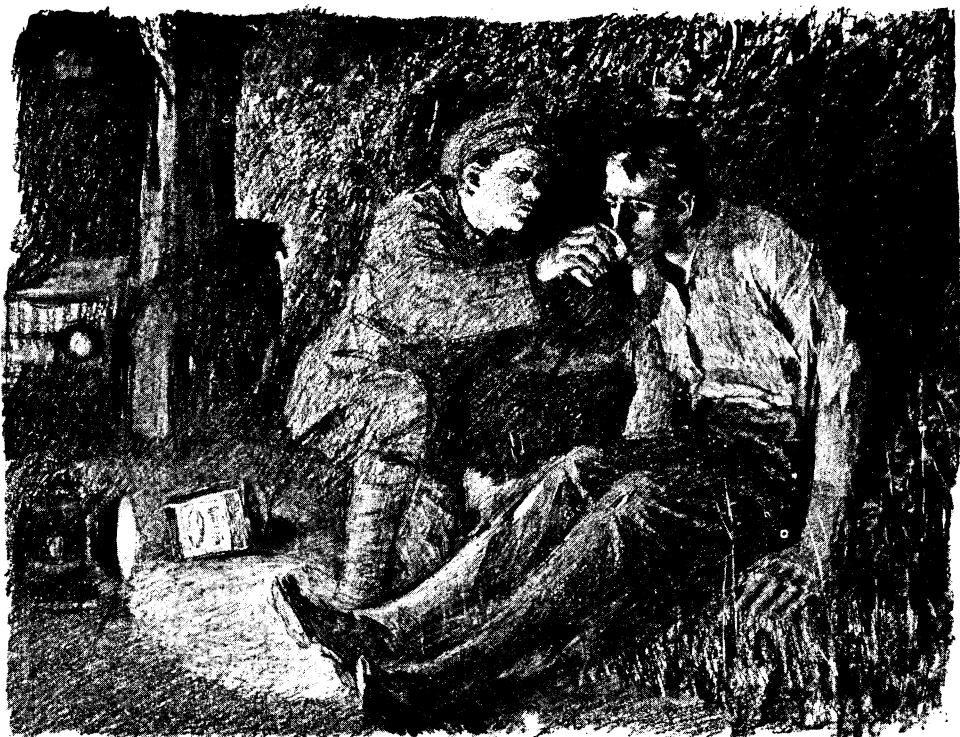
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"Bully beef and warm water are simple fare, but Private Albert Rogers had a head upon his shoulders."

VALERIE FRENCH

By DORNFORD YATES

*Author of "The Brother of Daphne," "Berry and Co.," "Jonah and Co.,"
"Anthony Lyveden," etc.*

I.—A PILLAR OF SALT

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

THE fire was still raging.

For thirty-six hours, now, it had burned steadily, a firm east wind directing the work of destruction with the lightning precision of an overseer who knows his job. Of the five thousand acres of woodland, once so luxuriant, barely a tenth part was left.

For week after blazing week the proud estate had gone thirsty. No rain falling, the wind had made hay, literally, while the sun shone. Springs had dwindled and died :

empty beds showed where the brooks had run : pools had disappeared. Even the lake itself, no longer fed, had shrunk to a dull pond, a widening belt of mud, seamed with innumerable cracks, about its sides. As for the trees, the source of sap failing, they were hard put to it to live. Without, at any rate, trunks, twigs, and branches were dry as any bone.

Everything, then, was in train. . . .

Whose hand it was that touched off the piece will never be known, but word that

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Gramarye was on fire came to *The Rose* at Girdle by ten of a handsome morning in the last week of July.

The news spread but slowly. Nobody cared. The park was deserted: its owner lay in a mad-house: the house was tumbling. If the tidings were greeted at all, they were greeted with approval. The host of *The Rose* himself made no secret of his persuasion.

"Bes' thing as could 'appen. No manner o' good to man nor beas', that place was. They're payin' fourpence a bucket at Beauty Cross, but if this 'ere drort 's put 'paid' to Gramarye. . . ."

He sighed dramatically, raising his eyes to heaven and, after a decent interval, his tankard to his lips.

"Wot's the place done?" said the Cockney, who was taking a car to Wales.

"Done?" said his host. "Well, it's sent three men mad to my knowledge, and that's the gospel. Livin' an' workin' there as lanskip-gardeners. Got 'old o' their brains it did, an' who's to wonder? Lanskip!" he added contemptuously. "'Owlin' wilderness. Nothin' but woods an' woods. Miles of 'em. An' never nor beas' nor bird in all them acres."

"Go on," said the Cockney, staring.

The lord of *The Rose* did not appear to hear him. He continued absently.

"An' now she's burnin' . . . Well, well. . . . Maybe it'll lif' the curse. Valuable buildin' land it'll be . . . one day. . . ."

That evening some children had straggled up Gallowstree Hill, to see what they could. This was nothing at all, for the fire was below and beyond a tremendous shoulder. They returned querulously to Girdle and declared the report untrue. Keepers of neighbouring property knew better, and kept an eye on the wind: Sir Barnaby Linchpin, whose land lay to leeward of Gramarye, held fifty beaters at hand for twenty-four hours: an evening paper announced that Sherwood Forest was in flames, and gave a *résumé* of the career of Robin Hood.

But that was all. And now thirty-six hours had gone by, and the fire was still raging.

From an odd chain of road, cut like a shelf upon a spur of the Cotswold Hills, a man looked down upon the holocaust.

From where he stood, this was indeed a stupendous spectacle. Distance and Night lent it a supernatural majesty. The one robbed the flames of their sting; the other

gave them their proper setting. The man found the sight fascinating. He did not, of course, care. Gramarye was nothing to him.

He must have stood gazing for half an hour, before a wandering breath of cool night air brought him to earth. With a shiver he turned away, making as though to button his coat about him. In the midst of the gesture he stopped and stared at his forearms. *He had no coat to button.*

The discovery clearly surprised him. After a moment he lifted his head and frowned into the starlight. Then he fell to inspecting his apparel, as well as he could. He had a shirt, certainly, and the wreck of a pair of trousers about his thighs, and there were shoes on his feet. The shirt was in tatters, the trousers ragged and foul. So much his fingers told him. The report his nose rendered was worse still. Both garments stank to glory.

The man exclaimed disgustedly, and his hands flew to his belt. It was in his mind, I fancy, to strip then and there. Reason, however, suggested that he must first find a change: he could not go naked. Again he raised his head and blinked into the night. Mechanically he put up a hand to finger his chin. . . .

As he touched the bristles, he started violently. Till then he had had no idea he was wearing a beard. As in a dream he felt all over his head. He found it unkempt, beastly. His face, he noticed, was gaunt, the cheek-bones staring. . . . Here his stomach got in a hungry word. For the first time the man realised that he was starving. . . .

Instantly the craving for food overwhelmed all other inclinations. This was, of course, common sense. Filth and odours could wait: hunger such as this was in Death's service—a running footman, in fact. The man knew in a moment the dreadful livery.

At once he started to walk along the road, squaring his shoulders to cheat the sense which told him his strength was failing, and hoping hard for a sign-post to point him the nearest way—*whither?*

The query occurring to him, the man stopped still.

He had no idea where he was. If it came to that, he had no idea, either, how he came to be in such a plight. His thoughts flew back desperately. He had met with an accident, of course. That went without saying. Foul play, perhaps. Hence his condition. The last thing he remembered was—was—

For the third time he frowned into the night, racking his brain.

This he did to no purpose at all.

For him there was no "last thing."

He could remember nothing.

* * * * *

When it dawned upon Lyveden that he had lost his memory, he became profoundly interested. So much so, that he forgot his hunger and sat himself down on a bank by the side of the road. After some meditation, he recited the Alphabet aloud. Pleased with this effort, he announced that London was the capital of England, and enumerated as many counties as he could think of. He was proceeding to another such exercise, when something touched him upon the calf of the leg.

Sitting at his feet was a small, rough-haired dog. His eyes were dull, and he was very thin. His coat appeared to be grey, and there was a definite black patch upon his back. For a long moment the two regarded each other in silence. Then the dog rolled over and put his paws in the air.

Lyveden patted him kindly.

"Where have you come from?" he said. Then: "By Jove, poor fellow, you're thin. Which reminds me. . . ." He got upon his feet. With a manifest effort, the dog followed his example. "It's obvious I must . . . have . . . food." He looked up the ghostly road, pursing his lips. "It must lead somewhere," he muttered, and started off

The first fifty paces bared an unpleasant truth—that to walk exhausted more quickly than to stay still. That Lyveden was heading for succour was practically certain. That every step brought him nearer the end of his tether was painfully evident. Which of these halts would come first, he had no idea. Lyveden set his teeth and hoped for the best. . . .

It was only ten minutes later that he remembered the dog.

Peering back into the darkness, he saw no sign of him. He whistled and stood waiting, without result. After a little hesitation, he began to retrace his steps. . . .

What those two furlongs cost him I dare not think. Perhaps Sir Philip Sidney walked at his elbow.

He found him at last, sitting miserably in the middle of the road. The poor little vagabond could go no further. Lyveden picked him up gently and put him under his arm.

"Buck up, old fellow," he said. "It won't be long now—one way or the other."

The scrap put up its nose and licked his face.

* * * * *

Private Albert Rogers, of the R.A.S.C. (M.T.), was bored stiff.

When he had been given his itinerary and told that he was to take 'The Swine' to Hounslow, he had at once protested that she would never get there. The wording of the sergeant-major's reply may be imagined, but must not be here set out. Suffice it that that authority had lamented the fact that there was no Rolls Royce available, had criminally libelled Private Rogers's forbears and had prophesied, first, no good concerning Private Rogers, but evil, and, secondly, that 'The Swine' *would* get there, even if Private Rogers had to push her the whole of the way.

With burning ears and a full heart, Private Albert Rogers had proceeded to pack his kit-bag. . . .

Quite early he had lost his itinerary, and somewhere about noon he had lost his way. It was when he was hopelessly confounded, that 'The Swine,' who had lived well up to her sobriquet ever since she had started, had played her trump card. In a word, with a diabolical scream she had spilled the contents of her gear-box upon the King's highway.

Private Albert Rogers had coaxed the lorry to the side of the road, shaken the sweat out of his eyes, and prayed for death. . .

His comrade-in-arms, Private Hoskin, was less dejected. Gifted with an invulnerable sense of humour, he had found the journey diverting, and had sung most of the way. He had not, of course, been driving. As the stertorous breathing of 'The Swine's' engine subsided, he laid a hand upon his heart and commenced a tender rendering of 'Where my caravan 'as rested.'

This was too much for Private Rogers.

As his comrade's superior officer, he issued two orders. The first was that Private Hoskin should "for gauze sake give over." The second, that he should get upon his flat feet, fare to the nearest village, and report 'progress.' The first command was disregarded: the second was obeyed after much argument and a delay of more than two hours.

It proved subsequently to be just six miles to the village of Broad-i'-the Beam, and as Private Hoskin did not march four miles to the hour, but rather two, by the

time he arrived the Post Office was closed. Not so *The Black Goat*. . . . After his third 'bitter,' Private Hoskin decided that to return to the lorry that night would be the act of a fool.

his subordinate, when somebody rapped with his knuckles upon the side of the cab.

Rogers got upon his knees and thrust out his head.



"The three watched him curiously."

All things, then, considered, it is not at all surprising that Private Albert Rogers was bored stiff. The lorry was empty: the two kit-bags offered a miserable couch: he had run out of cigarettes. . . .

For the hundredth time he was polishing the apostrophe with which he would welcome

A figure was leaning against the lorry's side, breathing distressfully.

"I say," said a voice faintly, "I'm—I'm rather done. . . . Could—could you spare me something to eat?"

Private Rogers stepped on to the foot-board and sprang down into the road.

Then he lugged a lamp from its bracket and held it to illumine the speaker.

The white, pinched face, the sagging knees, told their own tale.

"'Strewth!" said Rogers, and slid a

decanted the contents of the tin on to a newspaper, picked out the jelly with his knife, and watched his patient masticate every dram. When the latter had eaten perhaps a tablespoonful, he gave him water.

Then he wrapped a great-coat about him, and set a kit-bag under his head.

"Now you kin sleep, mate," he said, "for 'alf an hour. Then you'll 'ave to wake up an' 'ave some more grub."

Thankfully Lyveden closed his eyes.



"'Can't be done,' he said quietly. 'Not even that. You see, my memory's gone.'"

sinewy arm round Anthony Lyveden's back. . . .

It was a near thing.

Bully beef and warm water are simple fare, but Private Albert Rogers had a head upon his shoulders.

So soon as Lyveden was settled by the side of the road, his craving for food yielded to a frantic desire for sleep. This the soldier would not hear of. He fairly forced Lyveden to eat, feeding him with his fingers. He

The next moment he was propped on an elbow.

"The dog!" he cried. "I forgot. There was a dog with me."

"Now, you lay down, mate," said Rogers. "The dorg's orright. 'E's 'avin' 'is whack now. 'Elp," he added, staring. "'E's pouched the lot. Never mind. There's more where that come from. But you didn't ought ter eat so fas', Toby; nor yet so much, neither." The dog wagged

his tail and licked his lips. His host shook his head reprovingly. "Don't want to burst yerself," he added. "Now, you wait there while I get my mug. Then you kin 'ave some water."

He turned to glance at Lyveden. He was asleep.

The soldier's idea of nursing was rough and ready, but it was very sound. Faithfully, three times in the night Anthony was awakened and given nourishment, and when Private Hoskin arrived at nine o'clock, he was sent pelting back to the village for eggs and milk. To give the rogue his due, he went gladly. He had a good heart.

By half past two o'clock that same afternoon man and dog alike were changed beings. They were shaky enough, certainly, but they were not feeble. Beneath the care of Privates Rogers and Hoskin they put off their corruption.

Lyveden was assisted to remove his beard, and his hair was rudely cut with a pair of nail-scissors. The kit-bags were opened, and, after a heated discussion, a shirt, a cardigan, socks and an aged pair of slacks were selected and assigned to his use. Then a bucket was produced, and 'The Swine's' radiator used as a cistern. Anthony washed and was washed. The dog was cleansed also.

By the time assistance arrived, Lyveden was enjoying a cigarette. . . .

Even the two soldiers were surprised at the result of their handiwork. Out of their vile chrysalids had emerged two thoroughbreds. There was no doubt about it. Thin as rails though they were, the thing stood out. Lyveden's fine, clean-cut face, his quiet air of dignity, his pleasant voice alone were evidence and to spare. As for the Sealyham, he was an attractive fellow. His pert tail was up, and there was a light in his eyes. He rested a lot, certainly, but when he was on his feet his carriage was bold, and he held his head high.

At last Relief came panting out of the distance. . . .

When 'The Swine' had been made fast to the newcomer, Rogers approached his patient and offered to take him as far as Broad-i'-the-Beam.

"You ain't fit, sir, for duty, an' there's a pub there, Ted says, where they'll look after you. If you git there, you kin write 'ome an' say where you are, like."

Gentlemen both, neither of his two hosts had asked questions.

"You're awfully kind," said Lyveden,

rising and picking up the dog. "I suppose you realise that you've saved my life."

Private Rogers grinned.

"You was a bit queer las' night, sir," he said clumsily. "Firs' good turn the ole Swine's ever done, I reckon."

Half an hour later they stopped before *The Black Goat*.

Preceded by Hoskin, Lyveden and Rogers made their way into the inn. The landlord received them with a nod.

"This 'ere's the gent," said Hoskin, "as I was tellin' you of." The landlord bowed. "'E ain't quite 'isself yet, 'e ain't, but I said as 'ow you'd give 'im a bed to-night, so's 'e kin write to 'is friends."

"'Appy, I'm sure," said the landlord. "Sit down, sir. You've——"

"One minute," said Lyveden. "I have no friends to write to: I haven't a penny piece: and these two gentlemen here are the only beings I know."

The three stared at him.

Then—

"But you're a toff!" cried Hoskin. "A proper toff. Them trousers was dandy once."

"S-sh!" said the landlord. "I know a gent when I sees one. Look 'ere, sir, you've 'ad a tumble or somethin', an' if you'll give me your name——"

Anthony Lyveden started and clapped a hand to his head.

The three watched him curiously.

At last he looked round and smiled.

"Can't be done," he said quietly. "Not even that. You see, my memory's gone."

There was a long silence, broken only by the snuffs and blowings of the Sealyham, who was exploring the parlour and drawing the sweet sawdust into his nose.

"Well," said the landlord at length, "well, that's all—all right, sir. You . . . you . . ."

"If you'll give me shelter," said Lyveden, "just for a day or two, I'll pay you back. As soon as I can earn money, I'll——"

The host of the inn cut short his promises.

"'Ave what you like, sir," he said, "an' settle the bill when you please."

"You're very good," said Lyveden, and called for drinks.

It was before these were finished that Rogers excused himself to Anthony and, promising indeed to return, haled his subordinate outside. After a minute or two they both reappeared—sheepishly. . . . Then Lyveden asked for paper and wrote down their names. When the time of

parting came he walked with them to 'The Swine.'

"You know how it is with me," he said, "so I've little to say. If my memory ever comes back, you'll be the first to hear. One doesn't forget one's pals."

He shook hands with them, and they climbed confusedly on to the footboard.

A moment later 'The Swine' was under way.

Anthony watched it lurch round a corner.

Then came the sound of steps, and Rogers, red in the face, came running back.

"Quite forgot," he said jerkily. "Found this 'ere in your trousers, sir. In the 'ip-pocket. I 'ope perhaps the wordin' 'il 'elp your memory."

He thrust a slip of paper into the other's hand, took two paces backward, saluted, turned round and ran like mad.

As Lyveden unfolded the paper, there fell out two ten-shilling notes.

* * * * *

When Anthony Lyveden realised fully the state he was in—got, so to speak, the hang of his situation—he found it extremely good.

That he did not esteem it at once is not surprising. For one thing, the man was a wreck: for another, his loss was peculiar enough to bewilder a sage. It was not, in fact, until the fourth day of resting in and about *The Black Goat* that the excellence of his lot presented itself to his mind in all its glory. Many minds would have seen no excellence, nor glory either. *Quot homines, tot sententiæ.* But Lyveden was a philosopher: also his sense of humour was fine and sturdily grown. It was, indeed, thanks to this sterling equipment that he had determined to make the best of a bad business, and, whistling an air, whose extraction he could not remember, climbed cheerfully into bed. He had his reward. Waking at seven o'clock of a fragrant morning, and lazily planning, while he lay, the execution of his recent resolve, Lyveden suddenly saw that his task was already done. He found, in a word, that the business, which he was to better, was not bad at all.

Anthony sat up in bed, his brain whirling.

Here was a man, he judged, some thirty years old, intelligent, healthy, and soon to be very strong, without a care in the world . . . without a care. . . . Actually in the prime of life, he had been miraculously flicked back to the threshold. He had been given that for which Piety and Wit knew that it

was idle to ask. The Moving Finger had been lured back to cancel thirty pages.

Sirs, let us take this fortunate point of view, and, doing what Lyveden cannot do for himself, set it under a microscope. Two things stand out at once—a curious egoism, for one, a sense of relief, for another. Philosophy never wrought these. That relatives might be frantic, because he was out of their ken, never occurs to the man. Why? The bare idea of security has made him throw up his hat. Why? The reasons are plain. Lyveden's experience is at work—*behind the veil.* Again let us do as he cannot, and raise that veil. There is the truth, gentlemen, as clear as crystal. An orphan from birth, Anthony has no relations and next to no friends. As for his cares, he has of late been opposing a very sea of troubles. . . .

I have no wish, Sirs, to labour this matter, but we are dealing with a man's mind now—always stuff of importance, but in this tale the very headstone of the corner. Here, once for all, if you will, let us examine its state, and then—the lesson over—pass out of the latticed chamber to look at the bowling-green. Brains are all very well, but the turf at the back of the inn is a very masterpiece. But then Nature has slaved at this diaper for more than three hundred years.

That Lyveden had lost his memory is a loose statement. He had lost part of it only. For him, his personal past was blotted out. He could remember nothing that he had ever done or ever suffered. He could remember no acquaintance, local or personal, animate or inanimate, which he had ever had. With these important exceptions, his memory was pretty sound. What general knowledge he had possessed was, more or less, at his disposal. Names that were household words he well remembered, and their associations also: only—from those associations were excluded himself and all his works. Oxford, for instance, he knew for a seat of learning. He could name most of its colleges. He recalled the look of the place—hazily. Whether he had been schooled within its grey walls he had no idea. The fact that he could name but five of the colleges of Cambridge, and could not picture the town, *suggested* that he had favoured Oxford, but that was all. Again, he was clear that there had been a great war—most recently. Its cause, progress, and result, he perfectly remembered—particularly its progress. He dared not

swear that he had soldiered. Later, his detailed recollection of the fighting *suggested* that he had served with the guns on more than one front, but that was all. He could not remember that he had ever dressed for dinner, but he knew that this thing was done. . . .

Here we are coming to Instinct. Lyveden's instinct was as sound as a bell. As such, it was a buckler worth having, for while a baby's instinct is above rubies, that of a man of thirty, who knows his world, cannot well be appraised. Moreover, between Experience and Instinct there is a positive liaison. . . .

The moment that Anthony Lyveden found his necessity virtuous, he became almost debonair. Curiosity would have been inconvenient—spoiled everything. But he was not curious. He had no desire to remember. If it was so ordained, he was quite ready to remember. Indeed, he was eager to see whether the faculty of recognition had gone the way of his memory. Until he recognised something, this question would remain unanswered. It occurred to him that he might be recognised . . . accosted. Then he would learn about himself. Without doubt, a rare entertainment awaited him. . . . Anthony began to like his reincarnation better than ever.

It was later upon that same morning that he addressed the Sealyham. The two were seated beside that elegant green, waiting for the church clock to give the word for their departure. A shabby haversack had been packed, farewells had been taken, compliments exchanged. Refreshed and grateful, man and dog were going to seek their fortune.

"It is clear, my fellow," said Lyveden, "that we cannot remain anonymous." The terrier moistened his lips. "Quite so. You see, it's not only unfashionable—it's inconvenient. That we have names already is a charming but futile reflection. Whatever they happen to be, they've served their turn. You see, I'm a brand-new broom, and you know what new brooms do. . . . Well, I don't know about dogs, but I have a sort of idea that a man may not be his own godfather. The cryptic phrase 'deed-poll' seems to stick out of the mud at the back of my brain. Still, we must chance that. I propose to give names to us both—nice new names." The dog rolled over upon his back, and Lyveden patted him abstractedly. "The devil of it is, what to choose. They must be slap-up

names. We shan't ever get such a chance again, you know, so we may as well do ourselves proud. Let's see . . ." For a moment he sat, knitting his brow and stroking the dog's rough coat. Then his face lighted up. "'Hamlet'!" he cried suddenly. "There's a name for a dog. 'Hamlet.' My son, you're lucky. That was a blinkin' brain-wave, that was. Good name to shout and everything. 'Hamlet.' Well, that's that. Now it's my turn. I think," he continued slowly, "I think I must be called 'Jonathan.' I like 'Jonathan.' I've always liked 'Jonathan.' At least, I suppose I have. At any rate, I like it now, and——"

Here the church clock began to strike nine leisurely. . . .

Two minutes later Hamlet and Jonathan emerged from the kindly shelter of *The Black Goat* and, passing through Broad-i'-the-Beam, set their faces in the direction of the Oxford road.

* * * * *

Sitting in a very French room, overlooking an orchard, Lady Touchstone read through the letter which she had written.

Villa Narcisse,

Dinard,

29th July.

DEAR JOHN,

Letters from you suggest that we have been corresponding. I am glad to know it. The truth is that for the last six weeks I have done what I have done in a dream.

When Tragedy leaps from behind a curtain on to shoulders as old as mine—I feel four hundred—the effort requisite to deal at all reasonably with the event empties the brain. One's old wits fail. I cannot remember what I have said or done, or—worse still—whether I have said or done it. (I bought our tickets twice over—the same afternoon.) For the first time in my life I have a sound sympathy with those poor old people who, whenever you see them, tell you the same anecdotes. It is not their fault. Some effort has emptied their brains.

Poor Anthony Lyveden's body was found a fortnight ago—in a terrible state. The hot weather, of course. The clothes were gone. They say the left leg was broken. . . . We had him buried at Girdle. It seemed the best thing to do.

I notice I say 'we.' I should have said 'I.' The moment the news came, Valerie threw down her cards. I tell you, it was like Bridge. Up to that moment she and I had been partners, and she'd been the one that

mattered. Suddenly she became 'Dummy,' and I had to play the game. She's been 'Dummy' ever since. Wonderfully sweet and gentle, unnaturally calm, apparently perfectly content. But no initiative—no energy of mind—nothing. Every plan I make is 'admirable': every suggestion 'splendid.' 'She can't imagine how I think of it all.' But ask her opinion, and she'll smile and shrug her shoulders. She just doesn't care about anything, John. The frocks her maid puts out for her Valerie puts on. If she put out odd stockings, on to her feet they'd go.

I brought her here to get her out of herself.

To tell you the truth, I hoped and believed she'd kick. Do you understand? I wanted a sign of life. This agreeable apathy is frightening. A raging Valerie makes me tremulous, but Valerie meek and mild is shortening my life. I tell you I feel aged. . . .

Well, from that point of view, Dinard was such a failure that I was quite thankful I hadn't suggested Pekin. We should have had to go. This terrible approval of one's choice is far more compelling than any criticism.

I heard of a villa somehow, and here we are.

I have a good maître d'hôtel, who does everything. I think he is lining his pockets for years to come, but I would not part with him for a thousand pounds.

We eat, sleep, and are driven about the Department. We watch tennis; we hear music; we attend the Casino. We discuss—more or less cheerfully—the small things in life. The world sees a silly old fool with a devoted niece. I tell you, John, the girl is sweetness itself. Her affection brings tears to my eyes. But she is just 'Dummy.' Her character has gone.

Pray for her. Pray for us both, because for the moment I am, I think, indispensable.

Affectionately,

HARRIET TOUCHSTONE.

P.S.—If only they had been married instead of betrothed. . . . I shall always say that wedlock would have been proof against that influence. Valerie's arms would have won. Of course you'll shake your head. You must pretend disapproval because you're a priest. But you won't groan. I'll bet you don't groan.

H. T.

Lady Touchstone addressed the letter with a sigh.

It was right that John Forrest should know what was going on. She had told him, therefore, what she was telling herself. She did not tell him the fear which knocked at her heart daily, insistently. This was that

Valerie French, that glorious, dazzling creature, had gone the way of Lot's wife.

'She became a pillar of salt.'

A tall, graceful pillar—stricken, yet tearless—heedless of pain or pleasure as the pitiful dead, Valerie was warranting the comparison. Desire had failed.

Let us see for ourselves.

Upstairs, in a lavender wrap, hair-brush in hand, Valerie sat in her chair and stared at her glass.

An Eve stared back.

A painter once said of Miss French that she had never been born. He was meaning, I fancy, that she had sprung, like Cytherea, out of the loins of Nature. Indeed, she did not look a daughter of men: and if Cytherea rose from the foam of the sea, Valerie French came stepping out of the heart of a forest one sweet September morning, twenty-six years ago.

Nature's treasures had been ransacked to make her lovely. The cool of the dawn lay in her finger-tips; the breath of the mountains hung in her nostrils. Violets, dew, and stars went to the making of those wonderful eyes. Her skin was snowy, save where the great sun had kissed her—on either cheek; her mouth was a red, red flower. Her voice was bird's music; her dark hair a cloud; her carriage that of a deer. As for her form, straight, clean-limbed, lithe, its beauty was old as the hills. In a word, Valerie French threw back to Eden.

Valerie gazed and gazed. . . .

After a long while—

"Not a grey hair," she said slowly. "Not one. By rights, my hair should be white. By rights, my eyes should be staring. . . . They're not even strained. I ought to be thin, pale as a ghost, with great rings under my eyes. . . . I looked a million times worse before—before it happened. . . . And now, when nothing matters, when everything's gone—smashed—finished, I look my best. . . . I suppose it's because I can't care. . . . the power of caring is gone. I'd give my life to cry, but it can't be done." Her eyes fell to the table. "First, the golden bowl; then the cord—that beautiful, silver cord; then the pitcher of life; and now the wheel at the cistern. . . . Yes. The wheel's broken. I can't draw up any tears." She fell to brushing her hair absently. "We should have been married now, and he 'ld 've been dressing, too. The door 'ld 've been open, and he 'ld 've come walking in. Perhaps he 'ld 've played with my hair

. . . bent back my head and kissed me . . . laid his cheek against mine . . . Instead, he's lying at Girdle, under the ground. No one was there to hold his head at the last . . . to give him water . . . tell him it

the music. . . Then someone touched its owner upon the shoulder. The drawl snapped off short.

Step by step the air climbed to the pinnacles of Glistening Grief, trailing its audience behind. The exquisite atmosphere became rarer, more difficult to endure. A

wouldn't be long. Perhaps the dog was with him . . . whining . . . licking his face. I wonder what Patch did when—when it was all over . . . I'll bet *he* cared, poor scrap. But I, his queen . . . no. I'm not allowed. The wheel's broken."

* * * * *
Three slow-treading hours had gone by since Valerie looked at herself, and now Lady Touchstone and she were listening to an admirable orchestra rendering the duet from *Cavalleria Rusticana* with real emotion.

A silence had fallen upon the frivolous crowd. Beneath the music's spell the hubbub of mirth and chatter had sunk to a murmur of talk; in turn the murmur had died; only one voice had survived, nasal and drawling. . . . For a moment it seared

"Valerie French sat as though carved out of stone—or salt."

merciless fellowship of wizards, the band



slaved at its charm, sobering vanity, finding souls in the soulless, plucking out hearts right and left and clapping them upon sleeves. Lips began to tremble, hands to be clenched; eyes stared upon the floor.

Lady Touchstone blinked back her tears.

Valerie sat still, watching a moth that was busy about a lantern, and wondering where they would go when they left Dinard.

Suddenly, six feet away, a girl broke down.

Her chin on her fists, her elbows propped

fiercely. Her gleaming shoulders began to shake convulsively. A quivering sob fought its way out. . . .

The girl flung down her cigarette, buried her face in her hands, and bowed before the storm.

Perhaps five hundred eyes saw Valerie step to her side, put an arm about her, and lead her away. She went like a lamb. Lady Touchstone followed, snivelling and praising God. The gallant came last, feeling his position and savaging a young moustache. . .

As they came to the doors—

"We'll take her home, Aunt Harriet. She says that she'd like to come."

The car was sent for.



"The girl stifled a sob and bowed her head."

on a table, blowing furiously at a cigarette, she strove to carry it off. All the time tears coursed down her cheeks. The man beside her bent forward. . . . She shook him away

As the girl took her seat—

"Don't you come," she jerked out, addressing her squire. "Tell th' others I met some friends."

The youth uncovered relievedly. The last thing he wanted to do was to enter that car.

Then the door slammed, and he was left standing, headgear in hand.

He stared at his hat before replacing it. "André!" he said. "André of all women! . . ." He sighed profoundly. "My word, what a show!" He clapped his hat on his head and sought for a drink.

So far as that search was concerned, his lady beat him. While he was still wobbling between a vermouth, which he disliked, and a whisky, which he mistrusted, she was seated in a salon of the Villa Narcisse, sipping a brandy-and-soda of a very fair strength.

The liquor steadied her nerves. After a minute or two she accepted a cigarette.

Once she began to stammer some gratitude.

Valerie checked her at once.

"We'll talk when you're better," she said.

Then she turned her back and picked up a book. . .

André Strongi'th'arm was English and an attractive lady. Tears, of course, will make havoc of any countenance. They could not hide, however, her exquisite complexion, nor could they alter the shape of her maddening mouth. Pearls looked dull against the white of her throat, while her auburn hair alone made her remarkable. Enough and to spare for two women was crowning her pretty head. The lights that flashed from this glory beggar description. Her fine green frock became her mightily. This was none too long, but the shape of the slim silk stockings and little shining feet turned the shortcoming into a virtue.

Perhaps five minutes slipped by.

Then—

"You must think me a fool," faltered André. "A soppy, half-bred fool."

The other closed her book and rose to her feet, smiling.

"I don't at all," she said quickly, turning about. "As a matter of fact, I should think you could stand more than most people."

"I can," came the reply. "You're perfectly right. That music to-night caught me bending. I'd been thinking all day . . . thinking . . . letting myself remember . . . sticking a knife in my heart. Then that duet came along and drove it home." She snuffed out a sob with a laugh. "Serves me right," she added, "for being a fool."

"I wish," said Valerie French, "you'd teach me to cry."

The other stared at her.

"What on earth for?" She gave a hard laugh. "'Teach you to cry'? My dear, you wait. . . . Yes, and thank your stars. When your hour comes, you won't want any teaching."

"It's come," said Valerie. "It came a fortnight ago."

Miss Strongi'th'arm shook her bright head.

"No, it hasn't," she said. "Don't think I mean to be rude, but I know what I'm talking about. You think it has, but it hasn't. I know the symptoms too well."

"And I haven't got them?" smiled Valerie. "I know. That's just my trouble. . . . Supposing you're deadly ill, with a temperature of a hundred and four. All the time you look perfectly well, and the thermometer says 'normal.' Yet the fever's there—raging. Raging all the more because it's suppressed. . . ."

"You'd die," said André.

"I don't," said Valerie. "I wish I could. But that's where the body's so much better off than the mind. Symptoms or none, it can take to its bed and die. The mind can't. It just carries on and on." She sat on the arm of a chair and crossed her knees. "Death and tears are denied me. What's worse, I can't even care."

"Then why on earth worry?" said André bitterly. "My God, I wish I couldn't!"

"I don't worry," said Valerie, taking a cigarette. "I tell you I can't. But you forget the fever . . . the raging fever . . . raging to be expressed. You see, the tears are there. They must be. I can't get them out."

André Strongi'th'arm stared at this strange quiet girl who talked of death and tears as though they were pens and ink. She began to realise that she was in the presence of one whose acquaintance with Grief was rather more intimate than she had believed.

At length—

"You ask me," she said slowly, "to teach you to cry. Well, I'll tell you a tale. If that doesn't make you weep, I shouldn't think anything would."

"Do," said Valerie French.

The other leaned back in her chair and covered her eyes.

"I was engaged," she said, "to a king among men. He looked like a god. He could have married anyone, and—he chose me. The trouble was, Life wasn't big

enough for him. He wanted worlds to conquer, and there weren't any worlds going. He was like Warwick the King-maker. If the earl was alive to-day, I imagine he'd be out of a job. So was Richard. Then some relative died, and he inherited. Hardly any money, but an estate—a cursed horror of woodland down in the Cotswold Hills." Valerie started violently. Her face went very white. The voice proceeded jerkily. "A place called Gramarye. Only about forty minutes from where I live. . . . Well, the estate was a wreck. A park had been made once—cut out of a forest. Then it had been let go, and the forest had gradually swallowed it up again. It was a pity, of course, but the damage was done. Any idea of restoration was fantastic . . . out of the question. Very good. So was any idea of building the Pyramids. . . .

"I said Richard wanted a world. Well, here was one for him to conquer. He set himself to restore this dreadful estate. It gave his ambition scope, his wonderful 'drive' a field, his tremendous physical energy something to spend itself on. But the place was accursed. Soon it got into his blood. He could think of nothing else. Our marriage was postponed . . . postponed . . . postponed. . . . I hung on and hung on, watching Gramarye squeeze me out of his life and worm her way into his brain. . . . "Then . . . someone else came along—more splendid than Richard. His name was Anthony. . . ."

The girl stifled a sob and bowed her head, pressing her pointed fingers against her temples till the blood ran back from the nails. Valerie French sat as though carved out of stone—or salt.

"He—was—the—most—perfect—thing. . . . I told you Richard was a king and looked like a god. Well, Anthony *was* a god and looked like a king. He was the handsomest man in mind and body anyone ever saw. Of course I went under at once—right under. I flung myself at his head. So would you. I dare say you think you wouldn't, but I tell you you would. I never even stopped to think—I'll tell you why. *This wonderful creature was sitting at Richard's feet . . . working at Gramarye, too . . . wrapping her ghastly toils about his brain.* If I hadn't lost my head, I might have saved him. He might have listened to me if only I'd held myself in. I went to see him one night, determined to open his eyes. I opened them wider than I meant—and finished everything. I meant him to turn

down Gramarye. I only strengthened her case and got turned down myself. . . .

"Well, Richard went mad. I knew he would. He's in an asylum now. And, after a little, Anthony went mad, too. Where he is, I don't know."

There was a long silence. Presently André's hands slid into her lap.

"I think that's enough to bear," she continued dully, "but there's some more to come—a sort of aftermath. You see, my people don't know . . . that there was somebody else. They know I'm half off my head—all my friends do. *But they think it's because of Richard.* They're sweet and kind and gentle. They do all they can. Their interest's amazing, their understanding marvellous. But all the time *they're bathing the wrong leg.* Bathing and rubbing and bandaging till I could scream." She smote upon the arm of her chair. "I don't care a rap about Richard. He's nothing to me. They tell me the doctors' reports—break the bad ones gently, and wave the good ones about as if they were flags. All the time I don't care . . . I don't care. I'm thankful he's out of my life. I've not a scrap of compunction. I never meant anything to him. He was too big. . . . When I say I don't care—as I do—they think it's a phase of my grief. When I say he means nothing, they soothe me and change the subject. They've not the faintest idea that there's anyone else. . . ."

She broke off and shrugged her white shoulders.

"Well, there you are. You're not crying, I see, but then it's not your affair. Besides, I've told it badly. But if you could have seen that glorious specimen of manhood—that great-hearted, clean-handed gentleman, quietly working out his own damnation with an eager, grateful heart . . . if you'd had a chance of stopping this hideous rot, and chucked it away . . . if he'd shown you out of his cottage as he'd show out a traitress—so firmly, so sadly, so handsomely—with the kindest look that ever a man gave woman——"

André stopped short, and a finger flew to her lip.

The other's eyes were swimming . . .

A moment later Valerie French was weeping passionately.

* * * * *

Twelve more hours had gone by, and André Strongi'th'arm was packing her trunk.

A sudden knock at her door preceded a page, bearing a telegram.

André ripped it open casually enough.

Most splendid news darling come home at once Gramarye caught fire and is burned out apparently as direct result of this Richard completely recovered wire where and when you arrive Mother.

The girl stared at the words.

These slid to and fro, making absurd combinations. Presently they became ridiculously minute.

The sheet slipped from her fingers, but she continued to stare blindly.

Behind her, the page, who was waiting to hear it she had any answer to send, began to fidget. After a little, he stood upon one leg. . . .

The second instalment of this story will appear in the next number.



CHRISTMAS.

O GOD, prepare my heart to be
 An inn at Christmas-tide for Thee,
 An humble place that shall afford
 Lodging, though lowly, for its Lord:
 That cradled here Christ may be found,
 And here may still be holy ground.

So may I now prepare this room,
 Against the dear Lord Jesus come,
 That it be meet and fit for Him
 Who leaves the shining Seraphim,
 And deigns from Heaven to depart,
 Here to be born—in my poor heart.

E. VINE HALL.



JAMES BRAID DRIVING.

LONG DRIVING AT GOLF SOME OF ITS SECRETS

By HARRY VARDON

Photographs by Sport & General

LET us probe the secrets of long driving at golf. There is no gift so dear to the player who possesses it, and none so envied by his friends, as the ability to hit a prodigious tee shot. For proof of that, you have only to observe the extreme chagrin of such an individual when anybody outdistances him, or when he reads a printed opinion that he is not so big a hitter as somebody else. It is a very poignant moment for him.

It would pay him far better to be able to keep on laying approaches close to the hole, or getting down all his putts of four or five

feet, but in these successes he would find little of the ecstasy into which he is transported by a mighty tee shot, and none of the pride with which he is filled by his reputation as a smiter. Every devotee of this pastime wants to be a long driver. It is a natural ambition.

I think it was the late Hon. Alfred Lyttelton—a man with the capacity to play almost any form of sport like a champion—who said that the three supreme delights which games could afford were the crack to square leg off a half-volley just outside the legs at cricket; the cut stroke



HARRY VARDON DRIVING.

at tennis when the striker wins chase one and two on the floor; and the long drive at golf. We should hardly be human if we could willingly give up a supreme delight for something more profitable.

Sheer physical strength is by no means the key to rapture on the links. In the long-driving championship which took place at Sandwich in June, the honours were carried off by two men of markedly slender, rather than muscular, physique—Mr. John Smith, of Forest Row, Sussex, who had the best aggregate distance for two shots, and F. Easterbrook, a Devonshire player, who had the longest individual shot. True it is that some of the most powerful drivers—Mr. C. J. H. Tolley, Mr. Edward Blackwell, Edward Ray, and James Braid, for example—are tall and broad and obviously strong. But others are not. Abe Mitchell is of average build, and although his forearm and back muscles are well developed—the result, he says, of his work in his younger days as a gardener—I shall never believe that muscular development alone makes the long driver. For golf, the muscles have to be flexible rather than massive.

My own experience is that one's longest shots come when one is not conscious of hitting with unusual power, but when the



HARRY VARDON'S FOOT STANCE AT TOP OF SWING.



HARRY VARDON AT FINISH OF SWING.

swing of the club is working to absolute perfection. I never drove farther than when winning the open championship at Prestwick in 1914. People who took the trouble to ascertain the length of my tee shots said that several of them exceeded 300 yards, and I dare say that, although there was no wind to help, a few were of something like that distance.

Yet I was not forcing particularly for length. A lot of golfers say that with the rubber-cored balls the best results are achieved by hitting at the ball—much as one hits at a cricket ball—instead of swinging at it in the manner that was cultivated when the gutta-percha ball was in vogue. Personally, I am sure that a swing pure and simple is not only the best way to obtain distance, but is absolutely essential.

It may be that, in a world which is ever speeding up in all its phases, we are all swinging faster than of yore. Up-swings are certainly faster. You see comparatively few good players now who take the club back with the measured decorum which may be held to satisfy the “slow back” maxim, although Ray certainly does so. I suppose that the natural corollary of a faster up-swing would be a faster down-swing that would result in greater velocity of the club-head at the instant of impact,

and longer driving. But it is still a swing—and not a hit—that produces the mightiest shots. I have never seen anybody who



HARRY VARDON'S FOOT STANCE AT FINISH OF SWING.



JOHN SMITH,

Winner of the Long-Driving Championship at Sandwich last June, with the best aggregate distance for two shots.

made the club-head travel at so fast a pace as Mr. Wethered does as he nears the ball, but he is swinging it all the time, and not hitting with it.

Another fallacy is that a heavy club is an aid to long driving. In 1914 I used just about the lightest driver that has ever served me in a championship. Its weight was under fourteen ounces. In fact, I had put it aside a year or so earlier because it struck me then as being too light. However, as I was off my driving in the spring of 1914, I decided to try it again, and it gave me as good a spell of long driving as ever I have known.

A great many players have sought to lengthen their shots by resorting to heavy drivers—even up to the weight of sixteen ounces. I watched one of them not long ago, a former pupil of mine, who had shaped so well early in his career as to get down to scratch within two years of taking up the game.

His driving had gone utterly to pieces, and he asked me the reason. It was an easy

case to diagnose. "You are not swinging the club," I told him. "It is so heavy that it's swinging you." That, indeed, is what often happens when a golfer takes to a heavy driver. Instead of gaining distance, he loses it, because the club masters him and swings him off the balance as he strikes the ball.

I believe that Mr. Ernest C. Carter attributes the lengthening of his driving during the past two years partly to the substitution



F. EASTERBROOK,

Who made the longest drive in the Long-Driving Championship at Sandwich last June.

of a $14\frac{3}{4}$ -ounce club for one of $13\frac{1}{4}$ ounces. If he is correct in his supposition, his is the exception which proves the rule. In any case, $13\frac{1}{4}$ ounces was unduly light for a driver.

I am, and always have been, in favour of light clubs within reason. It is not the quantity of substance, but the way in which you swing it, that secures the long drive. Directly you get a heavy club you want to hit with it, and unless you have exceptionally strong forearms, you will not hit very hard, because the weight of the club will be in itself a burden to control.

If, when you are at the top of the swing, you will start the club down gently until you have recovered it from the back of your head, and then accelerate its pace so that it is gathering speed rapidly, you will preserve your balance and drive a long way. That quiet start to the down-swing is a valuable preparation. Without it the club-head may attain its maximum velocity, and start to slow down, before it actually reaches the ball. In short, the timing of the shot may be faulty. And it is perfect timing that produces length.



EDWARD RAY AT TOP OF SWING.



WISHES AND WINGS.

I THINK of birds with easy wings
That mock the hollow air,
The doves that follow lofty rings,
The larks that with their carollings
Climb up a cloudy stair,



The blackbirds that with weatherproof
Dark sheeny wings do fly,
The gulls that circle far aloof
As though they chiselled at the roof
Of marble-coloured sky.

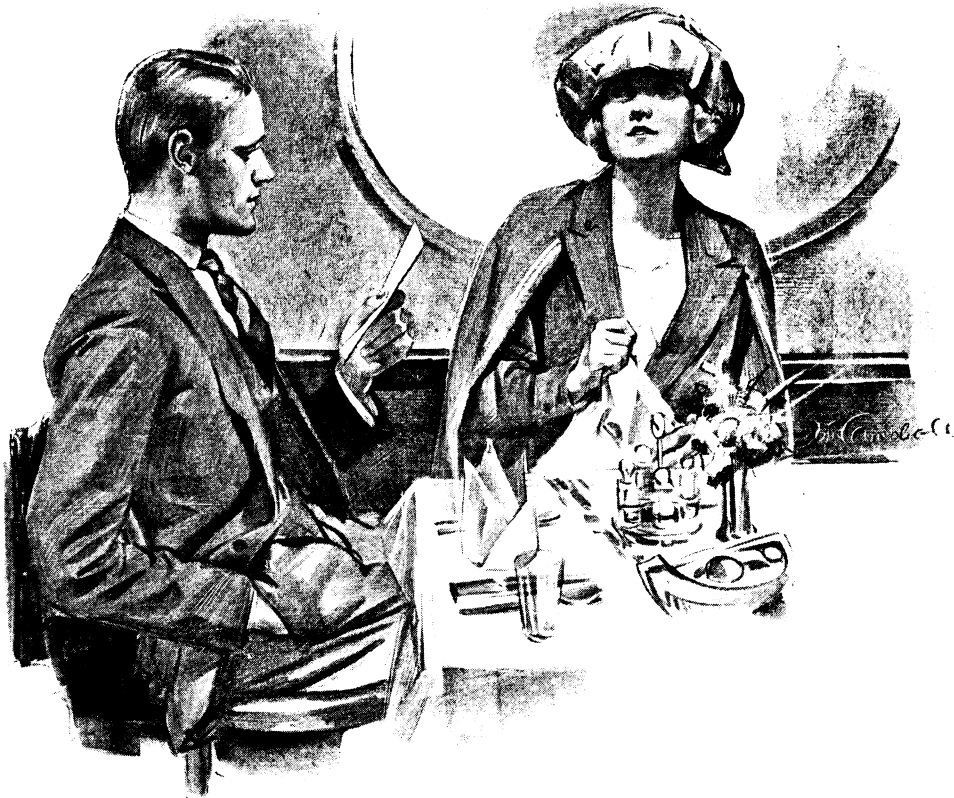


And much I wish my thoughts might take
The wings that serve their whim,
And leave behind the sad heartache
Of London City and awake
Among the moorlands dim,



When first dawn's lantern swings above
The road beneath the Tor,
And I be in the land I love,
With gull and blackbird, lark and dove,
That haunt old Dartmoor.

WILFRID THORLEY.



"She told him all about everything in five minutes."

WITHOUT A FAIRY A CHRISTMAS STORY

By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

IT may have been due to the illustrations in the Christmas numbers, or it may have been due to her sweetheart's mother's mince-pies. Anyhow, Betty Lee dreamed vividly of fairies on the night before Christmas Eve, and they listened obligingly to her suggestions as to the fairy deeds which they should do. The suggestions were chiefly for the benefit of other people—Betty was like that—but they included a new evening dress for herself for the dance on Boxing Day. In the dream

it was hung with many-coloured festoons like the paper chains the Lees always put up for Christmas Day.

"I wish there *were* fairies!" she muttered drowsily, when the alarm-clock went off in the morning. She knew that it would be a busy day for mother, and she wanted to do a few things for her before she left for business. So she had set the alarm half an hour early—at 6.35 instead of 7.15. You may think the arithmetic is wrong, but it isn't. Betty allowed ten minutes extra for

making up her mind to get out in the cold earlier than usual.

However, on this occasion she only took four and a half, because she had stood little May's doll beside the alarm, and she envisaged it in the dark. An arm had come off, and Betty had promised to sew it on before she went to business. She did not wish to do this out of the time that she had allowed for mother.

"I wish," she thought, while she put on her stockings in bed, "there were fairies that got you up washed and dressed, and warmed the room and mended things. A darning fairy and a sewing fairy. Lovely!" She jumped out, turned up the light, hurried into her dressing-gown and slippers, and rushed to the bathroom. "And fairies that lit the geyser," she added. "I hate the 'pops'! . . . And fairies that didn't let you forget your tooth-brush!" She went back to her bedroom for it.

"Who's that?" her mother called.

"Only me," she whispered. "Don't wake anybody. I'm early. You stay in bed a little longer, mum."

But her mother got up, and was downstairs nearly as soon as Betty. She prepared the breakfast, and Betty sat in the kitchen, close to the cooking-stove for warmth, and mended things off mother's basketful, and talked. She had a very active tongue.

"Tommy does wear things so," she remarked, "but it's because they grow too small for him. Well, I suppose he grows too big for the things! . . . Don't forget the holly this year, like you did last, mum."

"I didn't really forget it," her mother confessed. "It was so dear, Bet. Prices are a bit lower this year, but I don't know—" She sighed.

"Just a tiny, weeny bit, then. . . . There, that's done. This vest really won't mend any more, mum. It's all darn. . . . If you'll write those notes to go with Aunt Mary's and Mrs. Filmer's cards, I can post them; and I'll get the coloured paper for the chains and help the children make them this evening. I can bring Frank in, can't I? He's good at chains, and putting them up."

"That reminds me," mother remarked. "I suppose I'd better buy a little piece of mistletoe."

Betty laughed.

"Why," she cried, "you can save it this year! That's why I got engaged!"

"Have a thought for other people," her

mother said. "You aren't the only pebble on the beach, my dear. See if dad's getting up. The kettle's boiling."

Betty flew upstairs, carrying some hot water.

"Here," she admonished her father, "hurry up, you lazy old thing! Breakfast's nearly ready. Your charming wife and your lovely eldest daughter have been up for *hours*! Your hot water's in the bathroom. . . . Ugh! What a scrubby old chin! You've scratched your beautiful daughter's beautiful face. There ought to be shaving fairies to do it while you're asleep. Why don't you grow a beard?"

"Because," her father said, "I look old enough without. I think a business fairy is what is wanted. That rise isn't coming off, Bet."

"Oh, dad! Mr. Harris is a mean old thing!"

"It isn't that," father denied. "He told me he'd like to do it, but things aren't going well with the business. It's that old skinflint Manners. He knows we're overstocked, and in want of ready cash, and he's taken the opportunity to beat us down. Harris is more or less in his power. I don't know what will happen, Bet—I haven't told your mother yet; she's harped so on my getting a rise—but, unless they come to some satisfactory arrangement to-day, I don't know that Harris will be able to afford to keep me at all. That's where there's a job for a fairy."

"Oh, dad! You don't think—you surely don't think——"

"S-sh! Mother will wonder what we're talking about. Run along. I'm late. Since we have to do without fairies, we must make the best of what good things we have, little Bets, eh? Put a button on this while I wash, will you—like a fairy?"

"Oh," she cried, "I wish I were!"

She sewed on father's button, and attached the arm to May's doll, and put a few stitches in a loose leg which also threatened to come off. She found some books for the boys to paint (to keep them quiet), served the breakfasts while mother scribbled her notes, ate her own, rushed into her outdoor clothes, ran upstairs for a handful of little handkerchiefs and stuffed them in her handbag, and raced for her bus.

"Cheerio!" she called over her shoulder. "I'll look for a fairy."

"And she needn't look very far," her mother thought.

"Not very far," her father agreed. "Our

pretty Bet! She's very like you, mother, very like you!"

Perhaps father was a fairy for the moment when he said that, for his remark lightened mother's heavy day, which was just what one would expect a fairy to do.

Betty caught her 'bus and found standing room inside. It was a pity, she thought, that there weren't 'bus fairies to expand the seating accommodation. The early morning world—and the other-time world—could do with a lot of fairies, she reflected. Since it had to do without them, she decided there was nothing for it but for "people like me" to do all the nice things they could.

At the corner of Weston Street a thin, dejected-looking old gentleman, with a fur-lined and fur-collared overcoat, boarded the 'bus. He coughed testily.

"Outside only," the conductor warned him.

"I've a cold," the old gentleman protested. "I——"

"Outside only," the conductor repeated. "I've got all I'm allowed inside, and enough, too!"

"I'm in a hurry, and——"

"Outside *only*! Are you going on, or not? I can't stay here all day."

The old gentleman grunted and began to get off.

"I'll go outside," Betty offered. "It won't hurt me." She edged towards the door.

"I can't let you," the old gentleman began protesting; but the conductor pushed them both inside.

"Your fault if I'm run in for it," he declared gruffly, "breaking the police regulations."

"I'd rather go outside," Betty told him, "than get you in trouble."

"That's all right," he muttered. "They mayn't take any notice, being Christmas time. Christmas ain't what it was. People don't seem to believe in it."

"And that's a fact," a working-man observed. "It's a disbelieving age, and worse coming along. There's my nipper as I was telling last night about Santa Claus and Father Christmas. 'Gar'n, father,' he says. 'There ain't no fairies an' things like that.' His very words, and 'ardly turned five; but, mind you, he's sharp for his age. Sharp! . . . Take my seat, miss. A little bit more on my 'oofs won't 'urt me. Stand an' grow better, as the saying is."

"Thank you," Betty smiled; "but I sit at my work all day, and I expect you stand."

"Stand for my work," the man stated, "but now I'll stand for my pleasure." He got up. "You're welcome."

"And now," she told him, "*you* are a fairy! Tell your little boy that!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Funny old fairy, he'll say!" The man laughed. "We want a few fairies, don't we, miss?"

"Does it matter," a tired-looking little woman asked, "so long as people do fairy-like things?"

"That's right," agreed a fat woman with a big basket; "and more sense not to look for fairies to do nice things, but do 'em on our own. They pass on, and don't forget it, when anyone does a good turn to you."

"That's right," a hunchback man agreed. "This young lady starts the fairy business—being cast for the part—and the conductor passes on, and our friend that's standing 'on his hoofs'—and between times on my toes!—has done his little bit. . . . Next, please!"

They all laughed.

"You've been next," the stout woman told him. "Paid the young lady a pretty compliment. Trying to get off, ain't you? I'll tell your wife!"

"Charles Street!" the conductor announced. "And what do you mean about compliments, mother? Who's to know that the young lady isn't a fairy?"

The fur-coated old gentleman made for the door, with all eyes following him, turned there and bowed to Betty.

"Thank you for your kindness and consideration," he acknowledged.

"And mind you pass it on!" the stout woman called. "I'm one of them that speaks my mind, I am," she assured the rest of the passengers. "Know who he is?"

"If I hadn't," the workman stated, "I'd have offered to go outside for him, seeing his age. Old Manners, the dealer. That's 'im. You'd squeeze as much kindness out of a flint!"

"That's right," the stout woman agreed. "Aiming at him, I was, in what I said."

"I've never heard anyone say a good word for him yet," the hunchback declared, "not even a fairy."

"He—he thanked me very nicely," Betty pleaded.

"Mercer Row!" the conductor called.

Betty got up.

"Thank you *so* much," She smiled at the man who had given her his seat. "A merry Christmas to you—to everybody." She smiled all round, squeezed her way

through the passengers, and jumped out. "Good morning, conductor!"

"Morning, miss," he answered, "and a merry Christmas." He turned to the passengers. "Now," he said judiciously, "if that little gal was interdoosed to me as

Mr. Manners was, however, thinking of the subject at that very moment, or, rather, he was thinking how he could pass a kindness back to her. He was a hard man from loneliness rather than by nature—would probably have been quite a kindly person



"The fur-coated old gentleman made for

a fairy, I won't swear as I mightn't be took in."

"If everybody were like her," the tired-looking little lady remarked, "we could get on without fairies; but I'm afraid Mr. Manners won't think of passing her kindness on."

if he had married and had people about him like "that dear little girl." He felt that he would be glad to play fairy to Betty, only he did not know who she was, or how he would do it if he knew.

He would probably never have known, if an accident—or a fairy?—had not

reminded him. Just before he reached his office he passed a young man who bowed. He stopped and leaned on his stick and looked after him.

"Now," he muttered, "I know where I've seen her before. With that young

Clarkson at Barlingham and Foster's. He contemplates marriage, I believe?"

"Oh, yes," Jones said. "A Miss Betty Lee; pretty little girl; typist somewhere; daughter of Lee at Harris's. By the way, Harris is coming to see you this



the door, with all eyes following him."

fellow—what's the boy's name?—Clarkson. That's it. Frank Clarkson. With Barlingham and Foster. Ah!"

He went into his office, nodding his head thoughtfully.

"Jones," he told his managing clerk, "someone has interested me in young

morning. You've got him in a cloven stick."

"A cloven stick," old Manners said. "I know, I know. So she's Lee's daughter. If Harris gives up, of course Lee will have to go. How long's he been there?"

"Goodness knows," Jones said. "He was

there when I came here, seventeen years ago. We shouldn't want him, not in a position that he'd take. As we always agreed, I could manage the two concerns, if you absorb Harris's show. I suppose you will?"

"I—don't—know," Manners said. "You see. . . It's Christmas time, Jones, Christmas time."

"Er—yes," Jones admitted. "I don't see that has much to do with it. The better the day the better the deed. If you're thinking of keeping Harris going on the present terms, I'd say that you can't. You'd have to go easier, or he'd break. I thought that was what you expected?"

"Yes," Manners owned. He played with his paper-knife. "But something has happened——" He paused. What *had* happened? A fairy had passed him a kindness to be passed on! Not too much time left for passing on kindnesses. He was growing an old man. Of course, business is business; but it's only that.

"Well," he said, "you can send Harris in as soon as he comes. I'm not sure that I want to have unpleasantness just at this season."

"The governor," Jones told one of the staff, "has had a warning from the doctor, or something of that kind. Or else there's something that we don't know of in the old man's past. He's not his usual self this morning—talking of Christmas and letting Harris down easy."

As a matter of fact, Mr. Manners was thinking rather of what wasn't in his past—a wife, young people about his house, a young girl, perhaps, like Betty Lee, who passed kindnesses on.

"I wonder," he reflected, "if that is why we are given a life to live among our fellows? And no fairies to do our job. If I squeeze Harris dry, what good is the money going to do me? I shall only pass it on to charities. Why not choose my own charity while I'm alive? Why *not*? *Why* not? If she were *my* daughter, she wouldn't like *my* firm broken up. I wonder if I have suddenly become wise, or a fool?"

His verdict rather inclined to fool. Nevertheless, he passed Betty's kindness on to Harris, when he called later in the morning, a nervous and dejected man.

"It isn't only the consequences which will follow to myself," he pleaded, "if you press me. Others will be seriously affected—Lee, for example. He has been with me for six-and-twenty years, and no one ever had

a better man. Knows our business from A to Z, and looks after my interests as if they were his own."

"What do you pay him?" Manners asked. Harris told him. "Umph! That doesn't strike me as adequate."

"It isn't," Harris owned. "Of course it isn't. It's just taking advantage of the fact that a man of his age doesn't find another managing berth easily, and it would be a wrench to part company—a wrench to both. He asked me yesterday for a rise. I told him that he fully deserved it, but that I hadn't the money. 'What's the use of high prices,' I said, 'if the things don't sell, Lee; and you know how I've had to dispose of stuff under cost to Mr. Manners to find cash to carry on.' If you would drive an easier bargain with me, Mr. Manners, I assure you that the moment I could afford it I should offer Lee an increase."

"Umph!" said Manners. "Well, we'll put Lee down for another—what shall we say, Harris? A hundred and fifty more? Two hundred?"

"Sir," Harris gasped, "you mean you're going to offer some terms that will enable me to keep going? I—I—my wife—the kids—I——"

"Tut, tut!" said Manners. "Let us avoid sentiment in our business, Harris. Before everything, let us avoid sentiment. I say *our* business, because I think that an amalgamation offers the most satisfactory solution. You see, I must naturally have my pound of flesh from an outsider; but if I can look upon you as a junior partner—Well, it's no use having a member of the firm hampered by financial difficulties. It fetters his action. He's like a horse in hobbles—in hobbles. You follow me?"

"Sir——" Harris jerked out. "I—this kindness. It is unexpected!"

"That," Manners expostulated, "is a mistaken point of view. People should expect kindness. There would be plenty in the world if everyone who received a kindness made a point of passing it on."

Harris "passed on" to his managing clerk that very afternoon.

"Lee," he said, "my old colleague and friend, I went to see Manners this morning, and he——" He choked with emotion.

"Old friend"—Lee grasped his employer's hand—"he isn't going to—to break you, after all these years? Twenty-six years I've been with you!"

"We'll make it thirty-six!" Harris cried. "Forty-six! Fifty-six, if—— How old are

we, Jack? Umph! You'd be eighty, and I'd be ninety-one. We *might* do it. . . . He's made a most liberal arrangement. Here's the draft of it. Manners and Harris! See! We haven't dealt with the staff in it, of course, but we've decided to give you another two hundred a year, old man. That's one of my greatest pleasures in the affair. . . . He's a fine chap. I was quite mistaken in him."

"It looks as if a fairy had got at him!" Lee laughed. "My eldest girl said this morning that she was going to look for one!"

He little thought that it had all happened because she looked in the place where everyone should look for a kind fairy—at home!

Betty was the first at her office. This rather surprised her, because Annie French, the other typist, had said that she was coming early to type an important deed, which she ought to have finished the day before, instead of writing private letters.

"And she's so slow," Betty thought, "and makes such mistakes, and has to do folios over again. She'll never get it done by ten, and he'll be mad." She meant old Mr. Grice, the head of the firm. "She needs a typing fairy."

It occurred to her that she, at any rate, could type. She considered her qualifications as a fairy, with her finger on her lip. She didn't entirely like Annie. Annie was a young lady who considered that she had "come down" to work for her living—as if work ever did anything but lift the good worker up!—and gave herself airs, and her indifferent work tended to throw the difficult and pressing work upon Betty. Still, it *was* hard lines on a girl who had been well off till her father's death to have to work in a lawyer's office.

"They were all so nice to me in the 'bus," she decided, "and I've got to pass it on, haven't I? It's the only way to do without fairies."

So she sat down and typed at the deed which Annie should have done.

At ten Annie had not arrived, so Betty gave the boy the typing to take in to Mr. Grice. At half-past ten he demanded Miss French, and found out who had done the work.

"And now," the boy said, "he wants *you*, miss."

"Gracious!" cried Betty. "I wonder what I've done wrong?"

However, Mr. Grice did not consider

that she had done anything wrong, but several things right. He told her that he appreciated her good work and pleasantness and helpful disposition, and that he was giving her a rise. She said that he was very kind.

"Kindness," he told her, "deserves kindness. I hope you will have a very happy Christmas, my dear!"

"And I do hope you will, too, sir," said Betty warmly. "Thank you so much!"

Annie arrived at eleven in high glee. Her wealthy uncle had written to her to go to him at once—had sent her fifty pounds "to pay up anything owing."

"So Grice can get someone else to do his old deed!" she cried triumphantly.

"It's done," Betty told her.

"Oh! He put it on you, I suppose."

"He didn't," Betty denied. "I did it before ten."

"Oh!" Annie considered. "I say, why did you, before you were told? Was it to keep me out of a row? Betty, do you know, I think you're an angel!"

"Gracious!" Betty cried. "Wouldn't everybody laugh if they heard that? People are kind to me, so I have to pass it on."

Annie came and sat on the table, and put her hand on Betty's shoulder.

"Let me 'pass on,' Betty," she begged. "I'd love to do something for you. Now, look here. I'm going to send you a Christmas present, whether you like it or not, and it's going to be something you want. I know what that is, because we looked at it in Madame Mode's window——"

"Oh, you mustn't, Annie!"

"The cream with the pink roses," Annie said.

"I really couldn't, dear——"

"How," Annie inquired, "can I pass on if people won't be passed to? I shall go and get it now, and have it sent to you."

And she did.

At lunch Betty met Frank in Vilavinni's, as usual. He was there first, and had ordered her lunch for her already—turkey and Christmas pudding, which she thought delightfully extravagant. She told him all about everything in five minutes—the fairies, the rise, the dress, especially the rise.

"And I'm going to put it all by," she said, "if mummie *won't* take any. She never will. Ten shillings a week! I shall buy that desk you like for you. You can use it now, and when we furnish our house—if you don't get tired of me——"

She laughed.

"You *ought* to laugh at that!" he told her. (She gave him her hand under the table.) "Well, do I get in a word now? I've had a rise, Bet, and I really don't see why by this time next year—if you haven't grown tired of *me*—"

"I'm not that sort, boy!"

"You're the sort that—well, I can get on all right without any other fairy! It's a jolly good bonus this year, kid. I think we *will* be able to have a Jacobean side-board."

That had long been the great problem when they discussed "setting up for themselves."

"Really," she thought, "there doesn't seem much need for fairies, except for poor old dad."

He nodded.

"Harris's is in a bad way," he said. "I'm afraid— You see, he didn't know which way to turn for money, and so he sold off a lot of stock at ruinous rates to that old skinflint Manners. You know whom I mean?"

"Why, yes. He was in my 'bus this morning."

She told him what had happened.

"And really," she said, "he thanked me very nicely. You wouldn't think he was mean and selfish. If he were only a—Santa Claus sort of old gentleman! Just think what a lot he could do with all his money, if only a fairy would wave her wand over him! Oh, Frank, *why* aren't there any fairies?"

"I know one," he declared, "only she hasn't the wand. . . . An ice, being Christmas Eve, eh?"

"Ice-cream fairy!" cried Betty. "Oh, Frank boy, you *would* look funny with a wand and wings! You'll come home to tea

with me, won't you, and help make the paper chains? Then you shall hang up the mistletoe and kiss—mother!"

Of course he said he'd go, and went.

Father opened the door to them when they arrived home at half-past six. (They left their offices at five, but the time went somehow!)

"Well, Bet," he asked, "found your fairy?" He nodded at Frank.

"He would look funny for one, wouldn't he?" she admitted. "No. No fairy, dad! But we've done almost as well without. You just listen!" She told him excitedly about their rises and her dress (a big box from Madame Mode's had arrived, he said). She hadn't forgotten about his worries, but she was afraid to remind him of them, till it suddenly occurred to her that he looked remarkably cheerful. "Have you found one?" she inquired rapidly.

Mother came out from the dining-room then. She had been waiting round the corner to take her share in the great announcement. (Mother really was nothing but a grown-up Betty!)

"You promised I should tell them!" she cried. "Betty—Frank—Harris's is all right! Dad's had a big, big rise! Two hundred a year! So he doesn't need any fairies!"

Father put his arm round mother.

"One fairy is enough for any man to manage," he stated, "as you'll find out, Frank."

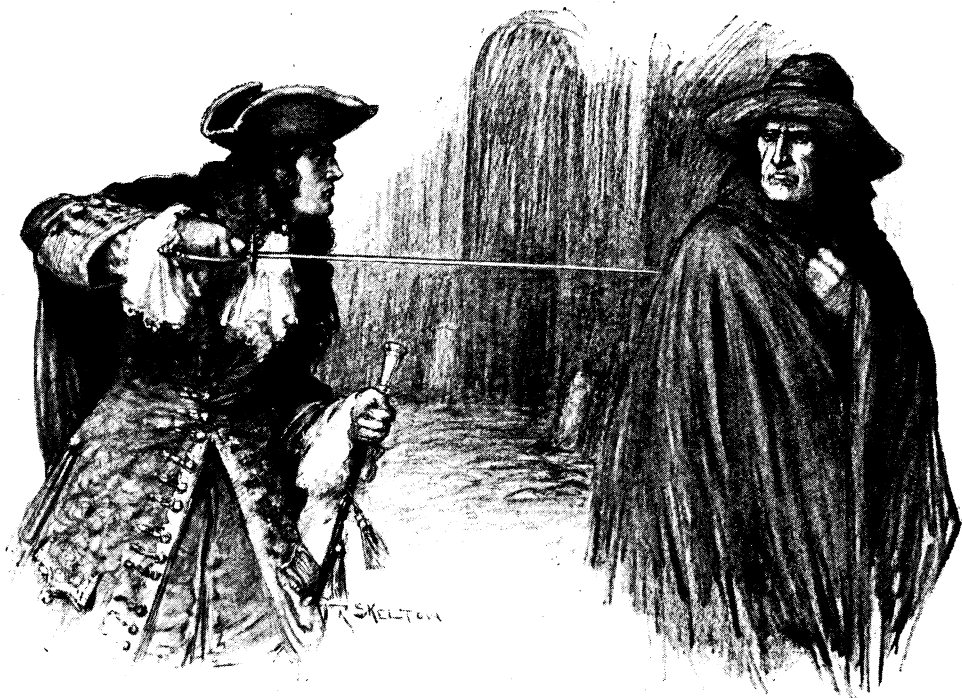
"Oh!" cried Betty. "Let me kiss you both!"

"All three," said Frank, "on an occasion like this."

Betty kissed all three.

"It is a fairy story," she declared emphatically, "without a fairy!"





"Stepping quickly back, he levelled his sword threateningly."

RETRIBUTION

By JEFFERY FARNOL

ILLUSTRATED BY J. R. SKELTON

THE moon was at the full and the clock of Saint Clement the Dane was chiming midnight when Mr. Merriam, reaching the arched doorway of Clifford's Inn, raised his hand to knock upon the wicket—a white hand, slim and elegant like himself, but a hand whose symmetry was marred by the loss of its little finger.

Mr. Merriam, then, raised his hand to knock, but, in the very act, checked himself and turned to peer over his shoulder.

It was Christmas Eve and freezing hard; in a cloudless firmament a myriad stars glittered, their vivid light scarcely dimmed by the pale glory of an orb'd moon that cast an ugly blotch before Mr. Merriam wherever he moved, the grotesque, foreshortened shadow of his immaculate and stately self; beholding which, he frowned and lifted scowling eyes to glare up at the

refulgent heaven and round about the silent thoroughfare. Then, slowly retracing his steps, he turned eastwards and sauntered towards the grim shadow of Temple Bar. From a sedan-chair a-swing between its trotting bearers issued a quavering voice upraised in song tipsily discordant; here and there a belated pedestrian, muffled to the eyes, hastened by; from dark corners misery peered and murmured hoarse supplications. But Mr. Merriam strolled leisurely on, all unheeding, and apparently impervious to the cold, left hand poised gracefully upon the hilt of his small-sword, right hand claspings silver-mounted cane, but his eyes—set in the oval of a handsome face, pale by contrast with the black curl of his great perwig—small, bright, and very keen eyes, scanning the loom of Temple Bar with a fixed and expectant scrutiny.

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Almost within the shadow of the Bar he paused to lean gracefully upon his cane and peer up at a row of rusted iron spikes that crowned the central arch, divers of which spikes were topped by awful, shapeless, festering things that had once been human. It was upon one of these dismal objects that Mr. Merriam focussed his keen gaze, a head so much fresher and less weather-beaten than its ghastly fellows that Mr. Merriam could plainly descry the pallid features in detail—the eyes that seemed to leer down at him beneath drooping lids, the pinched nostrils, the dark orifice of the mouth horribly agape.

Mr. Merriam smiled and, taking out his snuff-box, helped himself to a pinch, which he inhaled delicately and with an appearance of much enjoyment.

Many other eyes had doubtless looked upon this gruesome thing since it had been set up that morning, but surely none with such an expression of malignant satisfaction as those of Mr. Merriam.

"Egad, and so there you are, my lord!" said he in a soft, murmurous voice. "Not precisely the Apollo Belvedere you were, my lord, no. She would shudder away from you now, my lord, as she was wont to shudder from me. Aha, Barbara, my proud Lady Disdain, would ye kiss him now? Egad, I venture to doubt it, madam—aye, upon my soul, I do! So there are you, my lord, no very pleasing object, though you will look worse yet when the wind and rain and sun have been at you a while. There I have you, and there I leave you—to rot and rot, my lord—and over the Border is Barbara, waiting to be comforted! She shall be less cruel than she was, mayhap. We shall see anon. And so a merry Christmas, my lord, a fair good night, and may she forget you as speedily as you shall rot——"

"Was you speaking to me, sir?"

Mr. Merriam stood utterly still for a moment, then, fobbing his snuff-box, spun round upon the speaker, whipping out his sword as he did so.

A very tall man in a long, loose cloak, his features hidden in the shade of his wide-eaved hat, repeated the question:

"Was you speaking to me, sir?"

"I was not," answered Mr. Merriam, and, stepping quickly back, he levelled his sword threateningly. "Lift your head and let me look at you!" he commanded.

The man obeyed, showing a lean face with high cheekbones and a shock of fiery red hair.

"You'll be a Scot?" said Mr. Merriam, scowling.

"I am that."

"Well, yonder's another!" quoth Mr. Merriam, gesturing with his cane to the freshly-decapitated head above them. "Take my advice and don't prowl hereabouts, lest you come to a like end. Now, out of my path!"

The man stepped mutely aside, and Mr. Merriam sheathed his sword, then, becoming conscious of the other's fixed stare, thrust his mutilated hand hastily into his pocket.

"What the devil d'ye stare at?" he demanded angrily.

"Nothing, sir, forbye it ain't there. You ha'e lost a finger, and him up yonder his head! 'Tis you are the lucky ane—so far, I'm thinkin'. But as ye say, sir, here is no juist a verra healthy place for us Scots, so here's ane as will awa'. Gude nicht tae ye!"

Mr. Merriam stood to scowl until the flutter of the long cloak was lost in the shadows of Temple Bar, then went his way. Once he turned to glance back, and it seemed to him that amid these shadows were two forms now, crouching motionless to peer after him as he went.

Thus Mr. Merriam's step was a little more hurried and his knock a little louder and more imperious than usual upon the wicket, which, opening in due season, discovered Job, the night-watchman, lanthorn in hand.

"Is it you, Mr. Merriam, sir?" exclaimed Job. "'Ere's me thought I know'd all Clifford's gentlemen by their individual knocks, an' I took ye for Cap'en Standish a bit drunker than ord'nary."

"Has anyone inquired for me since I went out, Job?"

"Norra living soul, sir!"

"Egad, 'twould hardly be a dead one, I fancy."

"You don't believe in ghosts, then, sir—phantoms an' sich?"

"Tush and fiddle-de-dee, man!"

"Maybe, sir, but I've eerd tell as Clifford's do be 'aunted."

"By what, Job?"

"Can't say, Mr. Merriam, sir, but there's been enough folk die in Clifford's one way or another. And then there's the Bar, d'ye see. Will ye step into my lodge for a spell, sir?"

"Thank you, no—that is, yes, I will, if you've a fire; 'tis perishing cold."

"Aye, so 'tis, sir—reg'lar Christmas

weather an' all. But I've a fire as shall warm your outards an' innards in no time."

"You keep yourself very comfortable, Job," said Mr. Merriam, seating himself at the hearth and stretching his legs to the fire.

"Aye, pretty snug, sir, pretty snug! And there's a noo 'ead top o' the Bar. Did ye 'appen t' see it as you come along, sir?"

"Aye, I took some notice of it, Job."

"'Twere set up this werry mornin', sir. There be a friend o' mine, Ben Bowker by name, drove a roarin' trade wi' 'is spy-glass all day—a'penny a look—must ha' made a fortun'. Took a peep myself, though strictly grattus. A nice 'ead, sir—a young—ah, a werry young genelman, by his looks, sir, judging by 'is 'ead, young an' 'andsome."

"D'ye think so, Job? Who was he?"

"One o' them there rebel Scotch lords as was hexecuted yesterday. My darter went to see it, an' a werry nice affair it was, by all accounts."

"I rejoice to hear it, Job."

"Though they do say as this here young lord weren't s' guilty as some."

"Ha, do they, Job? What else do they say?"

"Well, as 'e were hexecuted on false ewidence, an' as they be a-seekin' an' a-searchin' for the informer."

Mr. Merriam blinked drowsily at the fire and pinched his pointed chin.

"I wonder if they'll find him, Job?" he murmured.

"I 'opes so, sir. I don't 'old wi' informers, not me. I mind Titus Oates, d'ye see."

"I wonder," yawned Mr. Merriam—"I wonder who this informer could have been?"

"Well, sir, Mr. Grice, at Number Fifteen, as is a lawyer, do tell me as this 'ere informer were the poor, dead young lord's very own cousin."

"Remarkable!" sighed Mr. Merriam, fingering a scar that marked his handsome face. "Mr. Grice, at Number Fifteen, would seem to be a singularly well-informed gentleman. However, the young lord is certainly dead—yes, very thoroughly dead, it appears."

"Aye, sir, nobody was ever deader. And s' young—no more than twenty-three, they do say. An' such a death!"

"Decapitation is a swift death, Job, and consequently a merciful."

"Maybe, sir, but think what goes afore the stroke—the soldiers, the crowds, the shouting,

the 'eadsman, the haxe itself! And 'im so very young, and at Christmas, too—I calls it oncommon 'ard! What I say is, if ever a dead man turned hisself into a ghost and took to 'aunting—flittin' an' flyin', moanin' an' groanin'—it should be this here young lord, and, what's more—" Job paused suddenly as if to listen.

"Ah, did you hear it, Job?"

"Aye, sir. Sounded like the wicket shuttin' to."

Mr. Merriam's drowsiness vanished in an instant, and he was upon his feet, his keen gaze upon the door.

"There is someone outside," said he softly.

"Aye, but 'oo should open or shut the wicket without me, sir? It ain't reg'lar."

Deigning no answer, Mr. Merriam crossed to the door, jerked it suddenly open, and, peering into the gloom of the arch, uttered a fierce exclamation and clapped hand to sword.

"Neil! Ah, thank Heaven!" exclaimed a soft voice, and forth of the darkness came a muffled shade, white hands outstretched.

"A young 'ooman!" quoth Job, contemptuous.

"Barbara!" gasped Mr. Merriam, then, seizing those white hands, stood a long moment staring into the face upraised to his, a beautiful face, though deadly pale beneath the shadowy hood. Then, with sudden, masterful gesture, he drew the unresisting hand within his arm and led the lady across the Inn towards the privacy of his chambers.

Job, peering after them, had the vague impression of a black shade that flitted behind them in the denser gloom, but, thinking this mere fancy, shook his head and shut himself in with his fire.

"Barbara," said Mr. Merriam, gripping the passive fingers he held, "here, in London! Can this indeed be you?"

"Wherefore not, Neil?"

"You are vastly changed since last we met, my lady."

"I am a year older and—wiser."

"And infinitely gentler. Egad, I can scarce believe you are that proud termagant that had me turned out—aye, driven from her haughty presence by her lackeys."

"I am not, Neil," she answered in the same low, even tone.

"And why are you here?" he demanded a little bitterly. "Why do you come to me?"

"Because I am solitary, Neil, and very lonely, and—you loved me—once."

"Aye, by Heaven, once and for always,



"Mr. Merriam turned and stood motionless; only his long, white fingers clutched and clutched at the laces of his cravat."

my lady!" he answered passionately. "I have waited a long time for this hour, and— Oh, Barbara," he whispered, stooping to behold her face, "how beautiful you are! Nay, why do you tremble? Are you cold?"

"Yes," she whispered, "yes, Neil, dreadfully cold—as cold as—death!"

"Come, then, I have a fire within doors yonder."

Mr. Merriam's chambers were on the ground floor, and he was stooping to fit key to lock, when he started suddenly erect and turned to find her close behind him.

"Did you hear anything, Barbara?" he questioned.

"Nothing, Neil."

"I thought I heard the chink of iron—a rattling sound like someone climbing the gate that opens into Fetter Lane yonder."

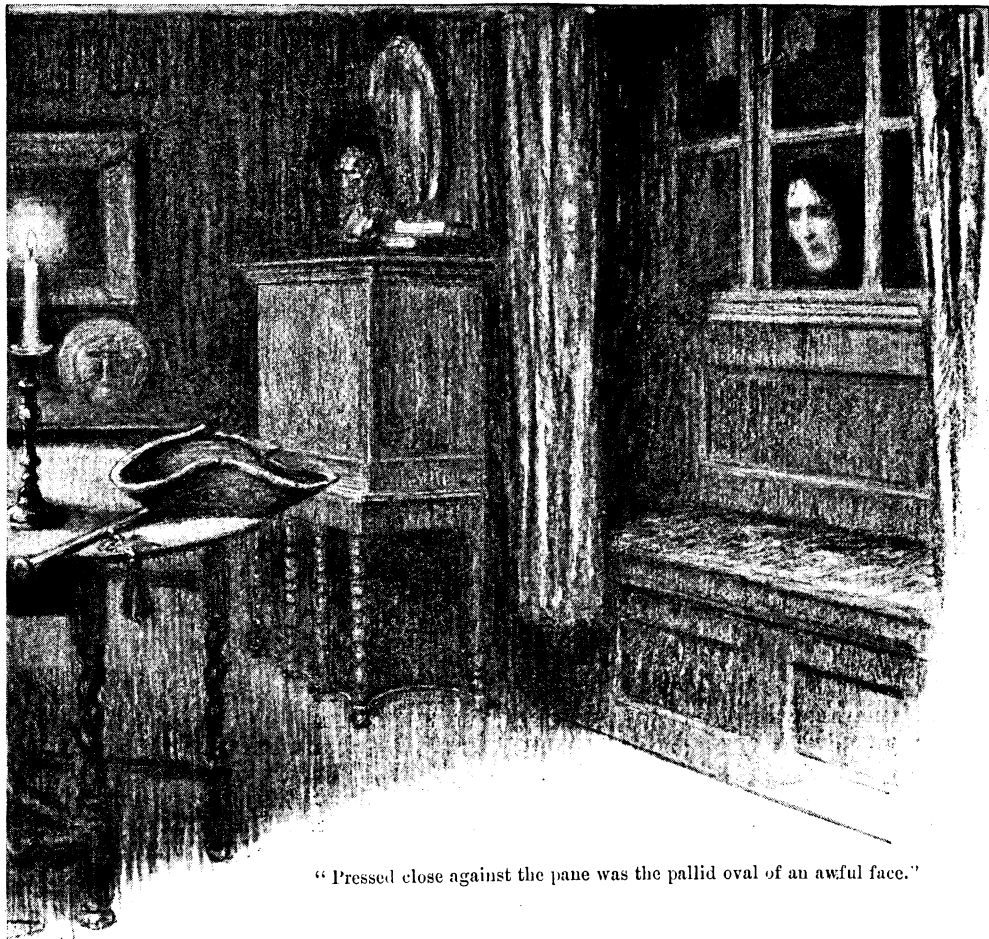
"'Twas the wind, Neil."

"But there is no wind, child."

"A shutter, then, the rattle of a casement. You are fanciful!"

"Belike I am," he laughed, "though 'tis something strange in me."

Then he opened the door and, having closed it behind them, heard her breathe distressfully as he struck flint and steel.



"Pressed close against the pane was the pallid oval of an awful face."

When at last he had lighted the candles, he saw her leaning against the door, her whole form shaken by violent tremors.

"What, Barbara, are ye so very cold?"

"Yes, Neil," she gasped.

At this he made haste to seat her in the great elbow-chair before the hearth, to kick the smouldering fire to a blaze, to fill her a glass of brandy.

"You are worn out, my sweet soul," said he, feasting his hungry eyes on her loveliness while she sipped the fiery spirit.

"Yes, Neil."

"And more beautiful than ever!" And, speaking, he took and fondled her nerveless hand.

"They—killed him yesterday, Neil!" said she, staring into the fire.

"So I hear," answered Mr. Merriam, kissing her cold, limp fingers.

"I—watched it done, Neil. And he saw me. Yes, amid all those thousands of faces his eyes found mine, and—he smiled on me, Neil—and his cheeks so pale—so very pale!"

"Fie, child, 'tis over and done! Poor

Roderick is dead indeed, but his troubles are done with. So forget this doleful business, banish these past, sad memories, and think rather of the future. To-morrow I was intending for Scotland and you—you, my Barbara."

"Poor Roderick!" she sighed. "Oh, 'twas pitiful to see how his hands shook and trembled despite his brave bearing!"

"Aye," exclaimed Mr. Merriam between gnashing teeth, "beyond a doubt it was upon his account you adventured all this way to London."

"'Twas to save you, Neil!"

"Me?" he echoed. "To save me, Barbara? From what?"

"A needless sin," she sighed. "I mean the murder of your Cousin Roderick."

Mr. Merriam sprang to his feet and stood scowling down at her, his handsome face suffused; his long, white fingers opening and shutting. "Madam!" he exclaimed. "Ha, my lady, dare ye name me murderer?"

She never so much as stirred or troubled to look at him.

"Yes," she answered in the same sighing voice, "I name you murderer because I know you intercepted that incriminating letter from France. I know 'twas you formed and laid the information against him. I know 'twas you sent Roderick to his death, and all—ah, Heaven—all for love of me!"

"So you dare to think 'twas I——"

"I know," she murmured, and, turning slowly in her chair, she looked at him at last; and before this calm, dispassionate scrutiny Mr. Merriam's bold assurance was shaken, his keen glance wavered, and he plucked nervously at his ruffle. "Ah, Neil," she sighed, "you sent Roderick to his death because you thought I loved him, and, had you but known, my heart was yours!"

Mr. Merriam gasped and fell back a step, voiceless and staring.

"And so," she continued in the same passionless tone, "I came hasting to tell you the truth, but was delayed on the road, and reached London only in time to—watch him die, and you that I loved become his murderer."

Mr. Merriam stared down at the beautiful, impassive face with eyes wide in horrified dismay.

"If this be true!" he gasped. "Oh, Barbara, if this indeed be true! Nay, but 'twas ever and always Roderick with you, and never a chance for me—aye, 'twas ever Roderick, curse him, curse him! You loved him. I saw it in your eyes a thousand times!"

"Oh, blind!" she cried, rising to her feet. "Oh, blind! I loved you then, Neil, and, God forgive me, I love you yet!"

"Barbara!" he cried, exultant, and reached out his arms to her. "Barbara!"

"Ah, no, no!" she panted, shrinking from him. "Your hands are red with Roderick's blood! Do not touch me!"

"But you love me, Barbara, you love me?"

"Aye, but there is your sin betwixt us!"

"Love should forgive all, Barbara!"

"But first must be confession, Neil."

"Confession?" he muttered.

"Oh, Neil," she sighed, "how shall sin be forgiven without confession?"

"So be it!" he answered, and, reaching out masterful arms, he clasped her, shivering, in his embrace. "Come to me, Barbara, your head upon my bosom, your eyes on mine, so! Now, loved woman, hear me! I have loved you beyond imagining, and, dreading to lose you to that lordly fool, my cousin, I took means to remove him!"

"By the letter, Neil?"

"By the letter."

"You laid the information that brought his head 'neath the axe?"

"I did! And you—you are my reward! So here, then, is my confession! And now kiss me, my Barbara!"

But from those quivering lips so near his own rose a sudden awful scream that grew ever higher and more shrill as, breaking from his lax hold, she flung herself down upon her knees before the elbow-chair and crouched there, her face bowed and hidden in her arms. And so came silence. But presently upon this silence came a rustling at the window, a soft padding against the glass. Mr. Merriam turned and stood motionless; only his long, white fingers clutched and clutched at the laces of his cravat; for pressed close against the pane was the pallid oval of an awful face that seemed to leer in at him beneath drooping lids and with mouth horribly agape.

With a tinkle of breaking glass, the lattice swung open and, as if borne on the chilly air, this ghastly thing projected itself into the room towards him.

Mr. Merriam uttered a dreadful, choking cry, and, crashing over backwards, lay very still, staring up at the rafters with eyes fixed and wide.

But though Mr. Merriam's eyes were so very wide open, he saw nothing of the figure that wriggled into the room—a very tall, bony man with fiery-red hair—and his ears heard nothing of the hoarse whisper—

"A' richt, my leddy. I ha' it safe doon from yon gate for ye. So awa' wi' ye ootside, an' leave the rest tae me. I'll no be verra long."

* * * * *

Next morning, his nightly watch over, Job, muffled to the ears, stepped out into the chilly morning air—an air vibrant with the joyous welcome of Christmas bells—and trudged off homewards. But, being close upon Temple Bar, he must needs halt a moment to glance upward at that pitiful thing which had been the cynosure of so many eyes, and had filled Ben Bowker's pockets at one halfpenny per look. Glancing upwards, therefore, Job stood suddenly agape, forgetful alike of cold, of breakfast, and the comfort of bed that awaited him, for there, in place of the head of that poor young lord, was another, with eyes fixed in a wide and horrified stare—a handsome face, pale by contrast with the black curls of its great periwig that stirred gently in the cold wind, the head and face of Mr. Merriam.



"Stand back, you fool!"

THE DILEMMA OF TROOPER BRENDON

By OTTWELL BINNS

Author of "The Man from Maloba," "A Hazard of the Snows," "The Treasure of Christophe," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT

OUTSIDE it was forty below zero, but inside the road-house that called itself grandiloquently "The Star of the Yukon" the stove glowed red, and the guest-room was full of genial warmth. At a rough table four men were seated playing cards, whilst a little way from the stove a girl sat on a low stool, embroidering a moccasin in the Indian fashion. The light from the kerosene lamp shone on hair black and shiny as the raven's wing, whilst the eyes, set under arching brows, as they

occasionally lifted themselves from the moccasin to stare absently into the stove, were like deep wells of darkness. Her features were clean-cut, her skin was creamy as ivory, and the hand that plied the needle small, the whole proclaiming race and breeding that seemed woefully out of place in that rough setting.

From time to time one of the men at the table lifted his eyes from his cards to look at her, making as she did a charming picture in the ruddy light of the stove. Then, at

the end of a game, as he set his last card on the table, he rose suddenly from his stool, revealing himself as a man of unusual height.

"Ah drop out," he announced abruptly. "Ah haf play one, two, t'ree hours. Eet ees enough."

He gathered up a pile of money that stood at his hand, and which represented his winnings, then, carrying his stool with him, he moved towards the stove and seated himself near the girl. As he did so, the girl glued her eyes to the moccasin and stitched with a greater diligence than she had yet displayed. The big man watched her with whimsical eyes, and a slow flush suffused the girl's face and neck, proving that she was not unconscious of his gaze. Marking the rich blood, the man laughed softly, and said in a low voice—

"You will not to me speak, Andrée?"

"What is there to say?" asked the girl in a voice the inflexion of which was that of French-Canada.

"Mooch!" whispered the big man, with another laugh. "Put away zee needle an' listen whilst Ah tell how greatly Ah you lov'."

"No, no!" whispered the girl in answer. "I will not listen to you, Nicolle Caron. I have already told you that it is useless."

"Mais—" began Nicolle, only to be instantly checked.

"If you insist, Nicolle, I shall leave the room."

Caron made a gesture of mock despair. "Non, Andrée. Ah weel be still as zee li'l mouse if you do not go."

For a second the girl let her eyes rest on his bulky form, and then she laughed. "You are not a very small mouse, Nicolle!"

"Non!" answered Caron, laughing with her. "Ah am like de beeg bal'-face grizzly, an' Ah haf beeg heart dat say—"

"Nicolle!" exclaimed the girl warningly.

"Ah forget!" said the big Canadian. "De heart it will speak, an' et say it all de time."

"Then it must say it to itself," replied the girl firmly, as she thrust in her needle anew.

Just the faintest look of disappointment showed on Caron's face as he watched her for a little time in silence, then he spoke again.

"Dat moccasin ees a beeg one—too beeg for your fader, much too beeg!"

Andrée Doret made no reply to this comment, but a little flush came into her face as she bent lower over her work, and,

marking that flush, Caron knew what he had guessed aright, and that the moccasin was for someone else than the proprietor of the bunk-house, who was seated at the table gambling with his guests; and he allowed his mind to review the possible suitors for one of whom this embroidered footgear might be intended. He could think of no one who seemed likely to have won the girl's favour, and he was still wondering, when the frozen stillness outside was broken by the yelping of dogs.

"Someone come!" said Caron suddenly, and looked towards the door.

The girl's eyes followed his, but the three men at the table, absorbed in their game, did not so much as look up from their cards. A few minutes elapsed, and no one entered the house. Yelping dogs and a man's voice raised wrathfully told their own tale to ears habituated to the sounds, and Nicolle murmured explanation.

"Heem careful mans. He feed de dogs b'fore he feed himself."

The sounds died down. There was the rap of a whip-stock on the door, a hand fumbled at the latch-string, and a man stepped into the room and stood with his hand on the door, holding it ajar whilst he surveyed the occupants. An icy draught surged into the room, and as it swept against his legs, Pierre Doret looked up from his cards.

"Shut de door!" he shouted. "We freeze!"

The newcomer laughed and closed the door behind him, and at the same time dropped the scarf that muffled his mouth, and, as he did so, Andrée Doret gave a little cry of surprise and rose suddenly to her feet. Caron glanced swiftly from the newcomer to her, and surprised a soft light in the girl's eyes that told its own story and revealed what he had sought for in vain.

"Mon Dieu!" he whispered. "De man for de moccasins!" And a moment later, as the man threw open his fur coat, revealing the uniform underneath, he added under his breath: "A poleecemans!"

The newcomer was indeed a member of the North-West Mounted Police, and his survey of the occupants of the bunk-house seemed to indicate that he was there on business, though his careless attitude immediately afterwards indicated further that the person he was looking for was not present. He dragged off his mittens as the girl moved towards him, and as he took her small hand in his, Caron saw in his eyes a light akin to that which he had surprised

in Andrée's, and nodded to himself as he repeated softly: "A poleecemans!"

The newcomer said something to the girl in a half-whisper which brought a swift flush to her cheeks, then, as Andrée hurried away to prepare a meal, the policeman moved towards the stove, threw off his coat, changed his socks and his moccasins, and then lit a pipe. His eyes roamed round the room once more, and at length fixed themselves upon the French-Canadian, who had watched all his actions without speaking. Caron met his gaze squarely and then shrugged his great shoulders.

"You haf not for me come, M'sieu Poleecemans?" he inquired pleasantly.

"Not this time, Nicolle Caron," answered the trooper, with a friendly laugh.

"Mother of Heaven! You haf my name?"

"Who hasn't?" answered the newcomer lightly. "You are the biggest man in these parts, except——"

The policeman checked himself suddenly, and a flash of understanding came in Caron's eyes as he inquired: "Excep' de mans dat you haf come to find, hey, m'sieu?"

A startled look came on the policeman's face. "How did you know, Caron?"

"Ah haf come from de Forks two days ago. Ah hear dere dat Beeg Benson haf a man keeled, an' Ah guess dat you haf for heem come. Dat ees so, ees it not?"

The policeman nodded. "Yes." Then he glanced towards the gamblers at the table. "Do they know?"

"Dat Benson he haf keel a man, *oui*. Dat you haf for heem come, *non*, Ah t'ink, or one would heem go to find."

"Then he is up here?"

"Ah not say dat, m'sieu. Ah am not a poleeceman's dog!"

"But you are on the side of the Law, Nicolle—I know that—and you would not help a brutal murderer to get away. I have heard what you did at Windy Arm when——"

"M'sieu," interrupted Caron quickly, "dere are t'ings of which et ees better not to speak. *Comprenez-vous?*"

He flashed a swift glance towards the table as he spoke, and, looking swiftly round, the trooper surprised one of the three men there staring at him intently, and in that instant knew which of them was the friend of Big Benson, whom he had followed three hundred miles on a winter trail.

"So," he said softly, "so!"—and then stared into the stove thoughtfully.

From time to time Nicolle Caron looked at him with questioning eyes, then suddenly broke the silence.

"M'sieu," he said, "you haf my name, but Ah haf not de pleasure of yours?"

"Oh," laughed the policeman, recalled from his thoughts by the question, "I am Maurice Brendon."

"Brendon! *Mordieu!*" whispered Caron in amazement, staring at the trooper as if he were a ghost.

"What is the matter?" asked Brendon sharply. "You look surprised, Nicolle."

"Matter?" said the other, in a low voice.

"Dere ees much de matter."

"But what——"

"Ah not tell, m'sieu! But Ah give you one piece of advice. Ah say to you, lose de trail of Beeg Benson; Ah say to you, go back, an' leave some oder man to find him."

His manner was earnest, almost imploring, and the policeman stared at him in astonishment. Then he said: "Oh, come, I can't do that, you know, Caron. Why should I?"

"Ah not tell you dat, m'sieu. But for de lofe you haf for your moder, Ah say, go back! Run away—fast. Whip de dogs till not de devil heemself can you catch."

"But, man, I am not afraid——"

He got no further. There was a sound of movement outside, the click of the wooden latch as someone tugged the string, and one of the men at the table rose abruptly. Then the door opened, and a man of almost gigantic proportions stepped into the room. He halted as he caught sight of the policeman by the stove, and the latter rose suddenly to his feet.

"Benson——" he began, and then his voice broke off sharply, and a light of horror came in his eyes.

"Vamoose, man!" shouted the man at the table, and, with a sudden reckless laugh of understanding, the newcomer turned to go.

Then the policeman leaped forward, and just as he did so, Andrée Doret re-entered the room, bearing a wooden tray. Big Benson fumbled for the latch, missed it, and turned savagely on the policeman, who had almost reached him. A second later the officer was looking into the black muzzle of an automatic pistol.

"Stand back, you fool! If you——"

Big Benson checked himself as sharply as the policeman had done. Amazement showed in his strong face. Then he broke into sudden discordant laughter. "You!" he shouted. "You!"

"Yes! And I arrest you for——"

"Oh, no, you don't!" Benson's voice cried harshly. "Keep back, you idiot, or——"

But though there was a strange look upon his face, Maurice Brendon was not to be deterred. He leaped forward, and as he did so the pistol cracked. Once! Twice! There was a cry from Andrée, a sudden crash of enamelled ware, and then the policeman reeled and fell almost against the door. Big Benson stooped swiftly, threw the fallen man aside, flung the door open, and a second later it crashed behind him as he fled into the frosty night.

II.

For perhaps five seconds after Benson's disappearance all the men whom he left behind remained as if frozen into immobility, then Nicolle Caron gave a great shout, "By gar!"

The next moment he leaped to the girl Andrée, who, white-faced and shaking, leaned against the rough wall, a little stain of blood showing on her blouse just below the right shoulder.

"Andrée, *ma petite* Andrée, he haf——"

"It is nothing," said the girl, straightening herself a little, "but he has killed Maurice, and——" Her voice broke suddenly, tears welled in the dark eyes, and she broke into violent sobbing as she looked towards the mounted policeman lying in a crumpled heap on the floor.

Her father moved towards her, and whilst two of the men turned Brendon over, to learn whether he were alive or dead, he made a quick examination of the girl's wound. Then he gave a little laugh of relief.

"Eet ees little. Eet ees nodings! Just a little kiss as de bullet pass. In one week eet weel be healed."

Caron, who had seen the groove in the white satin, nodded acquiescence. "*Oui*, t'anks be to God! But, *mon Dieu*, de man might haf her keeled." His dark eyes kindled with sudden wrath, and he shook a gnarled fist towards the door. "An' for dis, Beeg Benson he shall pay. Ah swear eet!" He moved quickly to the place where the two men bent over Brendon, and as he did so one of the men pointed to a place just above the temple, from which the blood flowed freely.

"He's a gonner, sure! That pistol was a heavy calibre, an' no man can live with an ounce of lead in his skull."

Nicolle heard the girl cry out at the man's callous statement; but without a glance

towards her, he bent over the fallen policeman, his face set and grim. He made a careful examination, then gave a shout.

"Père Doret, your brandy, quick! De poleecemans he ees not dead, *non*. De bullet haf scraped de bone an' den gone by!" He looked at Andrée, into whose dark eyes had leaped a light of hope, and he said: "Haf no fear, li'l one, your poleecemans weel live to dance in your moccasins yet. He ees what you call knock-out, noding more. In ten minutes he weel be laughing with you."

It was something under the ten minutes that Nicolle had prophesied when Maurice Brendon opened his eyes and, after a wondering look round, sat upright. His hand went to his head, which Caron had bound, and he looked questioningly at the big Canadian, who was kneeling near him.

"Eet ees nodings, m'sieu," laughed Nicolle. "A li'l flick an' a scrape, but very near. Take de brandy, an' tank *le bon Dieu* dat Andrée she ees not keel."

"Did he hit——"

"A flesh wound, m'sieu; but for dat he shall pay to de uttermost."

Brendon struggled to his feet and, as a feeling of nausea overcame him, leaned against the wall. Then, as the room ceased to swim before his eyes, he asked abruptly: "Where is he?"

"Gone, m'sieu, an' by dis time he weel be running for de border."

"That's all a hundred miles," said the policeman. "I must get him before he reaches it."

The big Canadian stared at him in wonder as he cried: "You weel follow—*now*, m'sieu?"

"Yes," answered the policeman shortly.

"But, havin' seen, m'sieu, surely you weel let him go."

The policeman looked at him, and in the other's eyes read secret knowledge. A grim look came on his face as he replied sternly: "No, I shall follow him. I shall take him down to the Post."

"But t'ink, m'sieu, if he shoot—what den?"

"Then I also shall shoot! It will be my duty."

"Dis duty of yours, eet ees a mad thing," ejaculated Caron, staring at him with amazed eyes. "You know who the man ees?"

"Yes! I didn't, but I do now."

"But, m'sieu, eet ees against Nature."

"It is in the police code, anyway." Brendon laughed hardly as he spoke, and

held out his hand for the brandy that Doret had just brought.

He sipped it slowly, and the pallor left his face, but the grim look remained. When it was finished, he crossed the room to where Andrée had seated herself by the stove once more.

"My dear," he said in a quick whisper, "I am sorry you were hurt——"

"Oh, I thank God you were not killed!" the girl whispered back.

"I must say good-bye now. I must follow that man, who is a——"

"But you are not able, *chéri*," whispered the girl in quick protest. "And if you overtake him, he will kill you."

"I must go," replied Brendon. "Every moment is precious."

"But—my dear——" The girl's dark eyes were full of anguish as she looked at him, and a little sob broke from her.

"It is in the way of duty," he said. "I have come three hundred miles for that man, and I must get him."

The girl looked round helplessly. There was a look of fear on her face as she thought of the possibilities of the situation, and as her eyes roved round the room, she saw one of the men who had been present in the act of departing. It was the man who had shouted when Benson had entered the room.

"That man——" she began, and stopped as the door slammed.

"What of him?"

"He is Big Benson's partner. He will have gone to warn him, perhaps to help him against you. He is a bad man, and you cannot fight two men."

"If there were a score——"

"M'sieu, how queeck do you start?"

The question came from Caron, who, unseen of Brendon, had moved across the room.

"At once," answered the policeman.

"Then, m'sieu, we weel start together, since we follow de same trail."

"Oh, Nicolle," cried Andrée, "you are going with him?"

"*Oui, ma petite*. Ah am wid de law—sometimes!" The Canadian laughed as he replied, and then addressed himself to the policeman once more. "You weel not object, m'sieu? Ah haf dogs dat are fresh, an' yours haf come far."

"Object! Great Scot! No, man. I shall be glad of your help. I will make you a special constable."

"Den, m'sieu, Ah weel the dogs prepare."

He bowed to Andrée and, turning, left the house. Doret and the other man who had been with him accompanied him outside, and for a moment Brendon and Andrée were left alone.

He opened his arms.

"Quick, sweetheart!"

The girl went to them like a bird to its nest, and he kissed her fervently. Then she whispered: "Oh, it is hard that you should go, Maurice!"

"Harder than you know, little one," he answered, the grim look coming back to his face.

"But Nicolle will help!"

"He will be a very tower of strength!"

There was a clatter of the wooden latch, and, after a swift kiss, the girl broke away just as her father re-entered the room.

III.

"M'SIEU, we make camp here."

"But why, Nicolle? Benson is still running, and the dogs are not yet done up."

"Dat ees so; but eet ees yet sixty miles to the border, an' Beeg Benson he must rest somewhere. He go far, an' he t'ink we do not follow. Den he weel take long rest, an' we rest now, an' come up with heem b'fore he start, maybe, maybe not; but we catch heem b'fore he cross the Alaskan border. Beside, dere are t'ings Ah like to say to you, m'sieu."

"Well, have it your own way. I know you won't let me down, Caron, and, after all, the team is yours, and you know what they can do."

They constructed a hasty camp, fed the dogs, and after they themselves had eaten, and were sitting by the fire smoking, Caron asked suddenly: "Beeg Benson, you haf heem seen before, m'sieu?"

"Yes," said the policeman shortly. "You know who he is. I saw it in your eyes back there at Doret's."

"Your own brodder, m'sieu, whom you would take to be hanged."

"Half-brother!" said Brendon. "But what can I do, Caron?"

"I not know. Ah t'ink what little Andrée say when she know. Eet ees not good dat brodder should hang brodder when eet will help heem to be rich mans."

"You know that, Caron?" cried Brendon in surprise.

"*Oui!* Ah haf with Benson talk. He tell me one day of how he ees rich mans in two years, when his fader's estate ees out of trust; he tell me also of you, whom he hate,

but he not know dat you are up here, Ah t'ink."

"Well, he knows now."

"*Oui, oui!* An' if you heem catch, an' he shoot, an' you also shoot, an' maybe you

emphasis the concluding part: "And will well and truly obey and perform all lawful orders and instructions which I shall receive as such, without fear, favour or affection of or toward any person So help me, God."



"Against the glow of the fire the big man made a perfect mark."

make de keel, what den, m'sieu? Haf you t'ink of dat?"

"I've thought of nothing else since we left Doret's. But that can make no difference. I'm bound to try and arrest him."

"*Oui, m'sieu.* Dat ees duty—a fool thing." Caron was silent for a moment, then he said: "Ah haf not yet de police oath take."

"By Jove, no! I was forgetting. Better say it after me." Caron repeated the oath of office, emphasising with a quite peculiar

"Widout fear, favour or affection," he quoted, as he finished. "By gar, m'sieu, dat ees stiff! But Ah shall obey as you do. An' now we sleep for one hour b'fore we start to keep de great oath."

Trooper Brendon felt little like sleep, yet a quarter of an hour afterwards he was sleeping soundly; and when he passed from sleep to waking, he was instantly aware that he had slept longer than the hour, for the fire was burning very low. He looked

round for Caron, and discovered suddenly that he was not there. For a moment he stared unbelievably, but the truth forced itself upon him. Nicolle Caron had gone, taking with him the sled and the dogs, leaving

"The — Judas!" he whispered to the frozen stillness of the night, then stood considering.

It was forty miles back to "The Star of the Yukon," and even without dogs he could make it; but ten miles further on there was a winter encampment of Indians, where he might requisition dogs and food and so continue the chase. He looked at the sled tracks, and saw that they followed those left by Big Benson. Doubts assailed him. Had Caron really sold him, or had he for



"But the Canadian's position was an awkward one, and though he shot to kill, he scored no more than a leg wound."

little more than a handful of provisions where he must find them. For the moment he thought he had been sold, and a great wrath surged within him.

some mad reason continued the pursuit alone? He thought of the Canadian's words, and was as suddenly convinced that the second alternative was the right one. That

decided him. Without a moment's delay he rolled up his blankets with the provisions, slung the pack upon his shoulders, and, slipping on his snow-shoes, swung forward on the broadly-marked trail.

* * * * *

About the time when Trooper Brendon started up the trail, Nicolle Caron halted his dogs and anchored them by the simple expedient of turning the sled on its side. Then, with the smell of burning wood to guide him, he began to make a semi-circle through a broad patch of tall spruce, and presently caught the glow of a fire. With infinite caution he crept forward, taking no chances, until he was sure that the camp which he was approaching was that of the murderer whom he sought. He passed through the spruce, crept across an open place, and into a clump of willows half buried in snow. The camp was now less than a score of yards away, and against the firelight he saw silhouetted a bulky form which he instantly recognised as that of Big Benson. Exulting, he crept closer, yard by yard, till not more than a dozen paces separated him from the camp.

For a moment he meditated a rush, and had half risen from his crouching position, when a second man appeared against the firelight.

"*Sacré bleu !*" he whispered to himself, as he realised Benson's partner had accompanied him on his flight.

For a moment he hesitated, and then crept forward, one, two, three yards more. The two men, busy preparing a meal, were quite unconscious of his presence, and for an instant he was tempted to shoot the murderer down without calling on him to surrender. Then, remembering the unwritten code of the force of which he was temporarily a member, which dictates that no trooper shall use his arms save in self-defence, he grinned, shrugged his shoulders at the quixotic folly of it, and obeyed. Rising suddenly to his feet, he gave the hail in a stentorian voice—

"Hands up, in de name of de Queen !"

The two men whom he hailed fairly jumped round, looking for him, but neither obeyed.

"Put dem up, or—— *Tiens !* Would you ?"

Benson's partner had suddenly drawn a pistol, but before he could fire, Caron's pistol cracked, and the man reeled, fell over the fire, rolled clear, and lay still. In the same moment, with amazing agility for so

big a man, Benson leaped, and dropped behind the half-loaded sledge, and from the cover it afforded opened fire. Instantly Caron fell flat in the snow and strove to burrow in it, conscious that he made a very conspicuous mark upon it. Benson's bullets plugged the snow about him, and suddenly the Canadian laughed.

"Beeg Benson," he shouted, "as a policeman Ah call on you to mak' surrender."

Benson's reply was a shot which broke the Canadian's left forearm, wrenching from him a sharp cry of pain. Having scored a hit, the man behind the sled redoubled his efforts, and, realising that his position was a quite untenable one, Nicolle Caron had recourse to a ruse. Waiting until his opponent had fired, he suddenly leaped up, spun round, and with a sharp cry toppled over in the snow, lying quite still in a crumpled attitude. He knew the risk he was taking, and waited anxiously for what was to follow. If Big Benson fired again——

But that the murderer did not do. He waited a moment, then cautiously lifted himself above the sledge and looked at the huddled figure in the snow. A brutal laugh of triumph broke from him, and, flinging caution to the winds, he left the sledge and began to walk across the snow. He had taken perhaps a couple of yards, when Caron fired. Against the glow of the fire the big man made a perfect mark, but the Canadian's position was an awkward one, and though he shot to kill, he scored no more than a leg wound, which, however, toppled Big Benson in the snow.

Surprised, the murderer ripped an oath, and fired back to the Canadian, just lifting himself for the rush. Caron went down with a bullet in his shoulder, but raised himself just as his opponent did the same. There was a click as Benson sighted again, and a great welling laugh broke from Caron's lips.

"Now Ah get you—murderer !"

Something gleamed in the other's hand as his arm was flung back to throw. Caron knew that it was a knife; but he only laughed again—a laugh of triumph—for, after all, a bullet is swifter than a knife, and before the steel left his hand, Big Benson toppled back in the snow dead.

With his end achieved, Nicolle Caron himself fell back in the snow, where for two minutes he lay like one lifeless. Then, feeling the sting of the bitter cold, he staggered to his feet and stumbled towards the fire. A blanket stretched to throw back the heat caught his eye. He tore it down, rolled

himself in it, then fell almost in a heap, fainting from shock and loss of blood.

It was half an hour later when he revived. The great cold had staunched his wounds, but he felt very weak, and was content to creep a little nearer the fire, from which position he watched the backward trail. Half an hour passed, then he heard the sound of cautious steps at the rear of the camp, and shouted weakly—

"Hallo! M'sieu Brendon!"

Brendon it was, and as he came forward he guessed something of what had happened, but asked no questions until he had made the other comfortable. Then he demanded:

"Why did you leave me, Nicolle Caron?"

The Canadian smiled. "Ah knew dat Beeg Benson, havin' keel once, would keel again, an' dat you would haf to shoot; an', as Ah tell you, eet ees not good dat brodder should shoot brodder. So Ah come an' mak' de keel instead."

"I ought to be grateful——"

"Dat not matter," said Nicolle quickly. "Ah not t'ink of you at all; I t'ink of Doret's Andrée all de time."

"Of Andrée!"

"*Oui*, de girl whom you will marry, an' whom Ah lofe, so dat for her sake Ah not want you keeled!"

Brendon stared at him in wonder; then, recognising the simple greatness of the other's action, he said humbly—

"Nicolle Caron, you're a better man than I am!"

"But *la petite* Andrée, she not t'ink so," replied the Canadian, "an' eet ees for you she keep de keeses, m'sieu."

But when Doret's Andrée heard the story nearly forty hours later, she spared one kiss for a lover whom she had rejected, and who in the large simplicity of heart had served her in spite of all.

"Always I shall remember, Nicolle, and Maurice——"

"If I forget, may I be forgotten of her I love, Nicolle."

"But dat you will never be, *mon ami*, never! Look at *la petite* Andrée's eyes!"

And, looking, Maurice Brendon knew that Caron spoke the blessed truth.

WHEN THE HOLLY'S RED AND KIND.

WHEN the holly's red and kind,
And the quick eve rides apace,
When the banter of the wind
Brings a blush to many a face,
When the icicles' delight
Makes the eaves and hedges bright :

Then's the time for roaring fires,
Ruddy apples from the bin,
Loves and friendships and desires
That a homestead may look in ;
Hearts that issue on great wings
Yet find joy in little things.

Autumn in her dolour lies,
Summer and her flowers are wraiths ;
'Tis a time for sterner ties,
For the welding of strong faiths,
For the broad ways of the mind,
When the holly's red and kind.

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.

THE TECHNIQUE OF TELEPHONING

BEHIND THE SCENES IN AN UP-TO-DATE EXCHANGE

By ROBERT L. HADFIELD

Photographs by "Press Exclusives," taken by permission of the Telephone Department and under its superintendence.

OF all the men who may be said to be the fathers of electric telephony—Philip Reis, Wheatstone, Elisha Gray, Dr. Page, and Graham Bell—it is the name of the latter that will go down in history as the inventor of the telephone as we know it to-day.

One of the reasons for the success of Dr. Graham Bell undoubtedly lay in the fact that he was a man of great imagination. He is reported to have said a few weeks before he died, earlier in the present year, that at one point in his experiments with electric telephony he was advised to leave such endeavours to experts. "Had I been myself an expert, I should never have invented the telephone," was his comment upon that advice, not meaning thereby to disparage knowledge, but to emphasise the need for perspective and far-seeing.

Bell, with his experiments, was fumbling in the dark of that still strange country called Electricity; yet whilst others may have had a greater knowledge of the formation of the tract of ground upon which they then stood, he possessed the great gift of imagination which enabled him to picture the wide country he explored and instinctively to take the path leading to the goal of his desires.

That was in 1876. In forty-six years great strides have been taken. If one may prolong the metaphor, high-roads now exist where Bell's stumbling footsteps pioneered the way; the telephone is part of our daily lives, is more intimate with the great masses of the people than its brother, the telegraph, and possesses an inherent possibility for

development into one of the greatest factors in the daily routine of commercial and social life.

For some time past the telephone system in the United Kingdom, with one local exception, has been a very sore subject indeed with a great number of people; it has been attacked from every angle, vilified, and the lives of those in charge of it in various capacities made hardly worth the living; it has been figuratively thrown to the dogs.

And all very healthy signs, too; for, to state a truism, there is nothing like criticism to act as finger-posts to progress, and too many of the scientific marvels of the day are taken for granted, with never a passing thought, by us all.

Great inventions pass into matters of everyday life with but little notice; we cannot even summon up enough interest in them to stone the inventors or cut off their noses. Marvels are no longer marvellous, wonders no longer wondered at. Within the last hundred years science has provided us with so many willing slaves of the ring, that we are no longer thankful for their care and obedience, and are inclined to grumble if the genii are a few seconds late in appearing at our rubbing of the talisman.

When reviewing the working of the telephone system of to-day, it is almost impossible to state any facts or endeavour to explain any of its intricacies without being accused of partisanship in this highly controversial subject. It is fashionable nowadays to speak disrespectfully of our

telephone system, and he runs the risk of being accused of special pleading who marshals facts whether for record or mere passing interest. It is, however, the desire of the present writer to hold the scales evenly; he is a humble private subscriber to the telephone system, has no wish to enter the fray as either pro or anti, and carries no axe to the grindstone. If it appears that the work of a modern telephone exchange runs too smoothly under the present description, it must be remembered that the various intricacies and operations are pictured as under ideal

and tear aside the veil that wraps it in mystery.

The subscriber's line leaves his house or office and enters a cable buried beneath the pavement of the street. These cables consist of a number of lines in pairs, the whole being bound together by heavy insulation. The actual number of pairs in a cable varies according to the development to be expected in the locality within a period of years, together with a certain number of spares in case of fault. The average number of pairs of lines in a cable is in the neighbourhood of six hundred. If a sub-

scriber's line becomes faulty owing, for instance, to a break somewhere in the cable, his circuit is transferred to a spare line, the "dead" line being disregarded. It would obviously be impossible to track a fault of this nature along every inch of insulated cable buried in many thoroughfares.

On arriving at the exchange—that place of so many wires—the first noticeable fact is the entire absence of wires. There is not, as might be expected, a maze of overhead

wires stretching to the roof of the building from all points of the compass. Wherever possible, new telephone wires are nowadays laid underground, in order to secure immunity from damage by storms. But for the fact that London's telephones were thus laid under the pavement, the whole system in the metropolis might have been wrecked by any air-raid on London during the War. There are still throughout the country over a million miles of overhead wires; the underground total is approximately two and a half millions, and this mileage is rapidly increasing.

The wires having passed into the exchange,



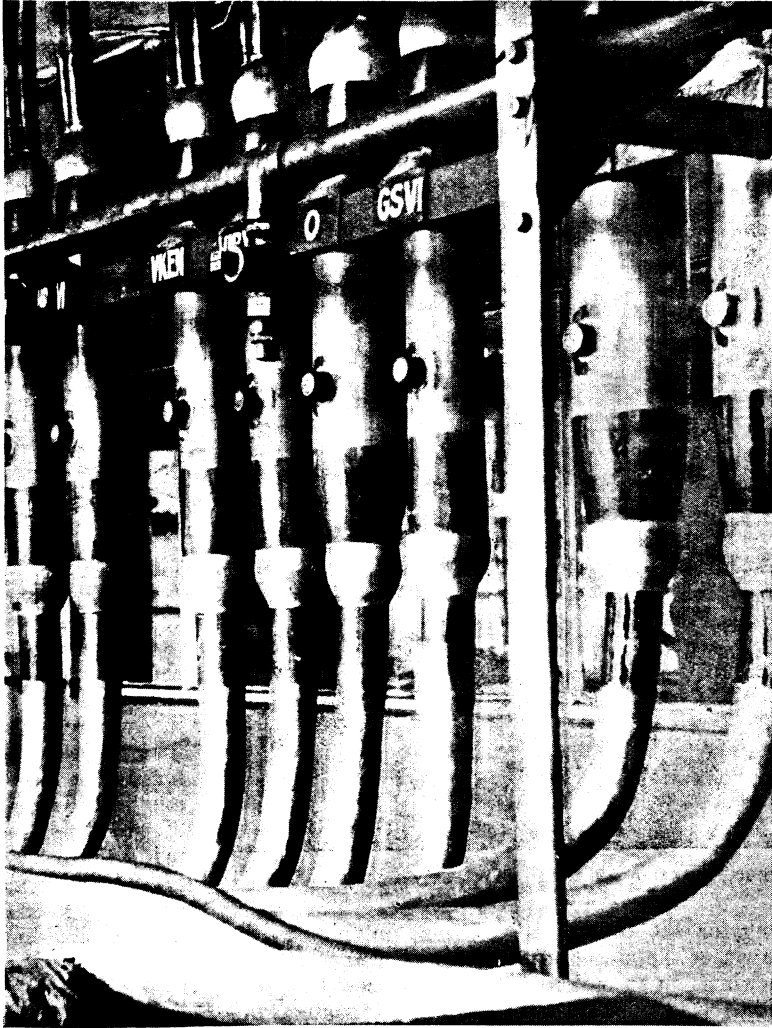
A MAIN OPENED, SHOWING SIX HUNDRED PAIRS OF WIRES.

conditions, eliminating for the time being the chance of fault in either the mechanical or personal elements which go to make up the whole organisation. Judgment is left to the reader.

Users of the telephone know that they are to "lift receiver and listen," and to "replace receiver when finished," according to instructions, when making a call. Of the operations on the part of the electrical machine and of the human telephonist in the exchange entailed by so doing, ninety-nine per cent. have little conception. Let us, by means of photographs, explore the system of a modern exchange

they are allocated to their positions on the main switchboard by means of a "distribution frame" (3). On the largest frames nearly 10,000 subscribers' lines are distributed to fifty or more different points in the switch-room, involving in this respect alone the use of many hundreds of miles of copper

operators—work, forming the human link in the long and tortuous chain joining user to user. The switch-room occupies the whole of the second story of the building of an average exchange. Around its walls is the great switchboard with its various positions for incoming and outgoing calls.



LINES ENTERING THE EXCHANGE IN MAINS.

wire. This is but one item in the many complications through which a line passes on its way to the operator; in order to keep the description of an intricate subject as simple as possible, these complications will be disregarded, leaving us free to enter at once the more interesting part of the exchange, namely, the switch-room.

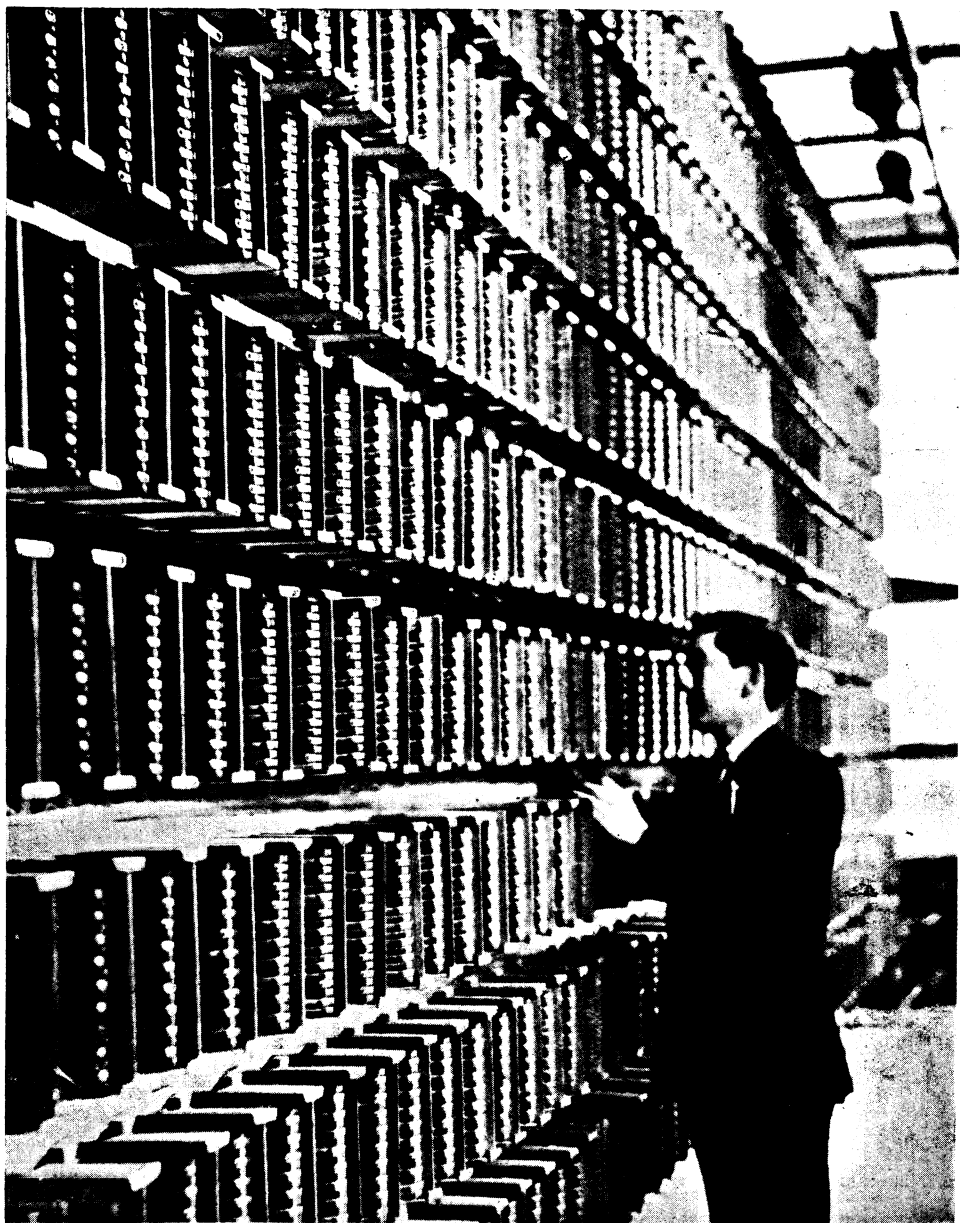
It is here that the telephonists—the girl

At other positions sit the "Test Operators," the "Information Officers," and the "Supervisors." Hanging from the ceiling are notices in large letters giving the numbers of the nearest fire brigades, police stations, salvage corps and ambulances.

Perhaps the most astonishing fact that first strikes the attention of a layman entering the switch-room is the absence of noise. Sound there is, but where one might have expected the clangour of ringing bells or at least a babel of voices, there is—even in the busiest part of the day at a leading London exchange—no more than a murmur of voices rippling round the room, as in colourless tones

the telephonists speak the set phrases of their work.

Into this room come the 10,000 lines of the exchange; here each line is repeated fifty times or more, the resultant complication of the half-million "points" needing little elaboration. It is by this means of repetition that each telephonist can reach in a second any number required



THE DISTRIBUTION FRAME IN ONE OF THE GALLERIES WHERE THE WIRES ENTER.

In case of mishap or breakdown, the faulty wire can at once be traced and a "cure" effected.

on her exchange. The telephonists attending to the ordinary work of connecting subscribers sit shoulder to shoulder at what is known as the "A" switchboard. Rearing up in front of them are the frames of "multiple jacks" for outgoing calls, each girl being allotted a certain number of incoming numbers according to the traffic to be expected from those numbers.

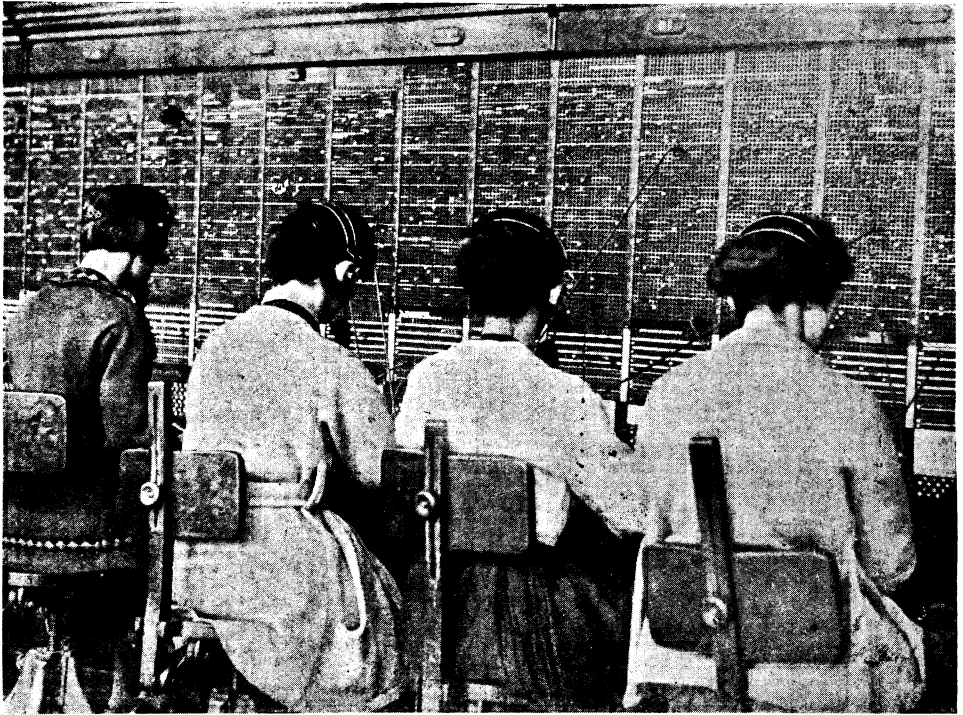
The answering "jacks" are situated on

the lower part of the switchboard, and are so arranged that operators can assist each other during pressure of traffic. This team work is systematically encouraged; experienced telephonists even work in fours, resulting in the subscriber having the possible attention of, not one, but four operators. Let us now analyse the operations entailed in getting a number.

When a subscriber calls, the act of raising

the receiver from its hook causes a lamp to glow in front of the operator, for the hook from which the receiver is lifted is not only a rest, but a switch, which by means of relays causes the lamp to glow. She connects her own instrument to the answering "jack" immediately above the lamp and says, "Number, please!" On receiving this, if it be on the same exchange, she immediately places the "calling plug" in the hole in the switchboard corresponding with the number required. Should that number be engaged, an intermittent buzzing—

is free, she completes the connection by means of the "calling plug." The called subscriber is rung up by the depression of the "ringing key," which automatically rings the bell at the other end of the line at five-second intervals. The answering of the telephone by that subscriber is signalled to the telephonist in the exchange by means of a lamp similar to the one previously mentioned. On the completion of the connection, two other lamps, known as "supervisory signals," go out, but glow again when the two subscribers restore their



TELEPHONISTS ATTENDING TO THE ORDINARY WORK OF CONNECTING SUBSCRIBERS SIT AT WHAT IS KNOWN AS THE "A" SWITCHBOARD.

Rearing up in front of them are the frames of "multiple jacks" for outgoing calls, each girl being allotted a certain number of incoming numbers according to the traffic to be expected from those numbers.

produced from an electrical device in the exchange's apparatus room, called in telephonist's slang "the busy back"—immediately warns her of the fact.

Even if the number required is on another exchange, the process is very little complicated thereby; for each telephonist has a set of switches at her side bearing letters in code—for example, BG for Bishopsgate—enabling her to get into touch with all the exchanges in her area.

If the number the telephonist is asked for

receivers to their hooks. The telephonist thus knows that the conversation is terminated, disconnects, and the lamps go out once more.

So far we have dealt with originating calls; calls coming in from other exchanges are dealt with by different telephonists on the "B" switchboard. All subscribers' lines on the exchange are repeated to these "B" telephonists in the same way as to the others, thus enabling the girl receiving a call from another exchange to connect

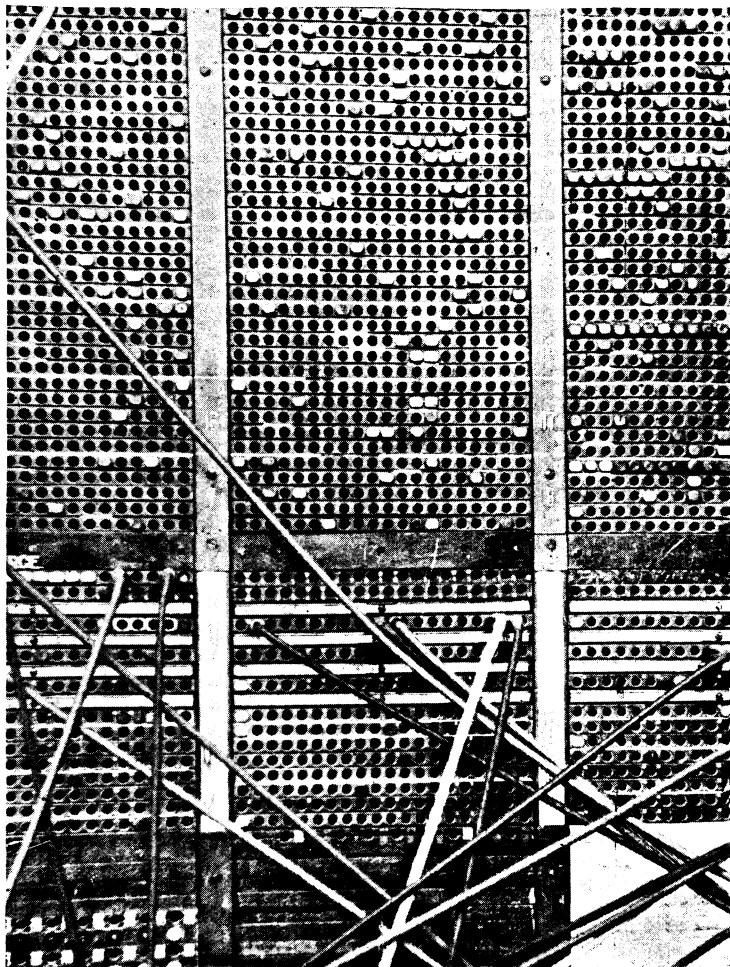
immediately to the wanted number on her own exchange. The traffic going on may be likened to that of a railway, with its "up" and "down" lines. The first operators we have dealt with attend to the "departure platform," the latter to the "arrival platform."

We now arrive at an operation on the part of the girl telephonist with which no subscriber can feign disinterest—that of charging for the call made. Down in the basement of the exchange is a vast set of electrical meters, one for each subscriber. These are operated by the telephonist with a press-button. When a conversation is ended, and that fact signalled by the glowing of the "supervisory lamps," the telephonist depresses the button allocated to the pair of cords in use, and registers a call against him on his meter in the basement. That the meters shall be fair, each one is examined at frequent intervals and the electrical installation tested lest leakages might affect the registering of the calls. If a meter is out of order, it is as likely to register too few calls as too many.

It is important for a subscriber to inform the operator if his call has not been effective, say, for instance, when he has been put on to a wrong number. Should she have connected a caller to a wrong number, unless informed of the fact, she cannot right the matter, and a call has been charged. But when informed, she has a means of crediting the subscriber with a call. For this purpose a small brass "cage" is used; this slips over the head of the press-button, and when in that position

prevents the button being depressed and informs the telephonist that the caller is "one up," and is to have the corrected call free.

At night men telephonists take the place of girls, and a slight alteration is made in the working of the exchange to meet with different requirements of traffic. It is not



A "CLOSE-UP" OF THE SWITCHBOARD, SHOWING THE PLUG HOLES.

Each plug hole represents a subscriber's number. They are arranged in multiples, so that by glancing up and along, the telephonist can quickly pick out the number she wants. The wires seen are those connecting subscribers who are in the act of conversing.

necessary, of course, to have anything like the same number of operators at work, the ratio being somewhere about 180 by day to 26 by night. This lower number means that there is not a telephonist ready at every position on the switchboard, and as the glow lamps cannot be seen from a distance, bells are called into action. A subscriber ringing

up at night, therefore, causes a bell to call the attention of the telephonist in addition to the lamp, and at the same time yet another lamp, easily seen from a distance, signals from what portion of the switchboard the call originates.

In addition to the regular operators in an exchange, there are certain telephonists

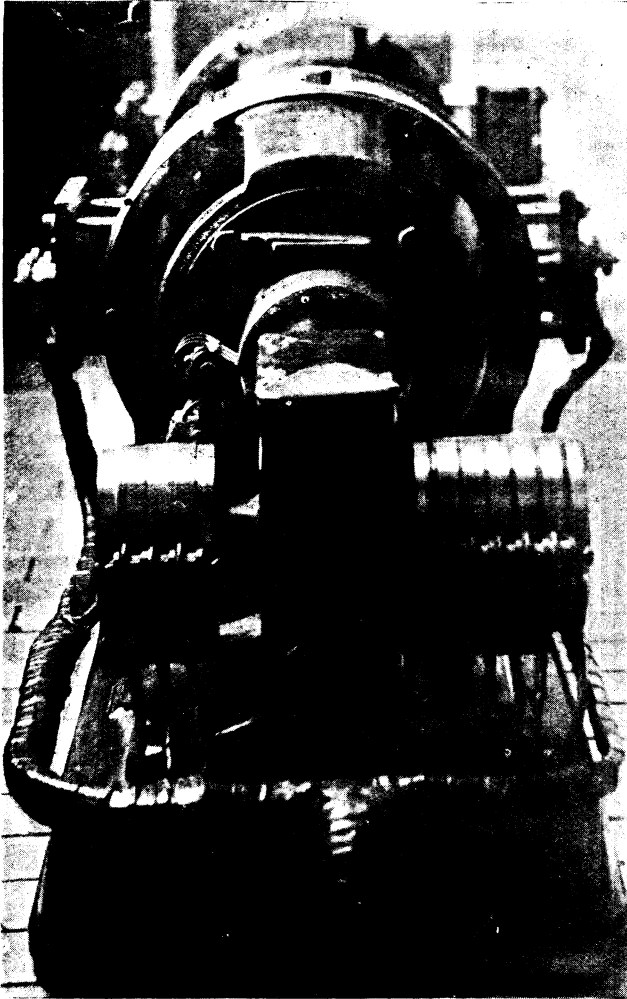
it is passed on to the Engineers' Test Desk. With the aid of special instruments these Testing Officers can determine exactly the nature of the trouble, and, in most cases, are able to inform the "Faultsmen" of the exact nature of the irregularity. Everything of this nature, whether of complaint as to delay, or "number continually engaged," or fault of any description, is recorded on a docket on which are printed in code all the possible complaints and faults which the Telephone Controller can think of as likely to arise.

It is often said that the "sifters" or supervisors of an exchange are too ready with smooth answers. Though undoubtedly it is their business to "turn away wrath," no complaint is allowed to pass without investigation. It may happen that a caller complains that at a certain hour he was cut off for five minutes from a number. Investigation may prove that the number to which he was talking broke off the conversation to take a trunk call; this fact is recorded and the complaining subscriber is duly informed. If inquiry proves that it was the fault or carelessness of an operator, that girl is questioned by the chief supervisor.

Even if the foregoing description of the work of an exchange has been carefully studied, many may not notice one point which few subscribers realise, yet one that may be of some assistance to telephone users. This is that a call originating in one exchange and terminating in another is controlled by the originating exchange.

It may happen that A on Mayfair rings up B on Central, and the conversation is cut off. It is useless B ringing up and slating the girl who answers him, for she has nothing to do with the call, and was actually unaware that he was on the line at all.

We have now used the words "fault" and "complaint," and are beginning to tread on dangerous ground; yet we cannot



THE ELECTRICAL DEVICE WHICH WARNS A TELEPHONIST THAT A NUMBER IS ENGAGED.

whose duty it is to deal with faults and complaints. They act as "sifters." On any of the regular telephonists receiving a complaint of, say, a faulty line, this is immediately put through for the attention of the "sifters." If they are able, they rectify whatever is wrong; but in the case of the fault being beyond the scope of their work,

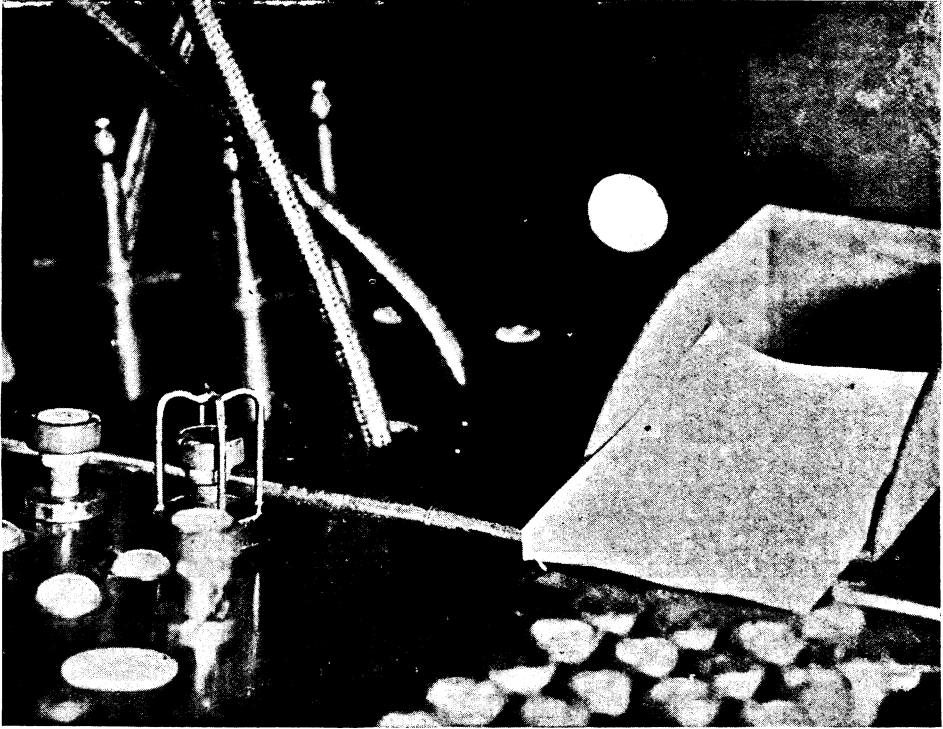
leave the subject without going a short distance into these controversial matters. Again protesting impartiality, record will be made of some of the ways and means devised by those in authority over the telephone system for dealing with such things.

A short time ago there was much popular outcry as to "listening in" on the part of telephonists. The idea that they do is deep-rooted, and is much in the same category as the confirmed opinion of most people that postmen read postcards. But whatever precautions are taken by the authorities

number is engaged. It is even hinted that the parrot cry "Number engaged; shall I call you?" comes from a lazy operator.

But the fact is that by saying that a number required is busy when that is not the case obviously saves her no trouble—in fact, will make extra work, for the caller is almost certain to ring up again a few moments later.

One of the mysteries of the telephone is in connection with those overheard conversations when waiting to be connected with a number. Not an individual who has



THE PRESS BUTTON (ON THE EXTREME LEFT) WITH WHICH CALLS ARE CHARGED, AND THE "CAGE" SHOWS WHEN A CALL IS TO BE CREDITED.

The small brass cage, here shown in position, is slipped over the head of the press-button, and when in that position prevents the button being depressed, and informs the telephonist that the caller is "one up" and is to have the corrected call free.

to prevent listening, the greatest safeguard exists in the girls themselves. Though supervisors are continually at the backs of the girls, walking up and down behind them the day through, the telephonist who makes listening a habit is placing extra work on the shoulders of her companions, soon becomes unpopular, and is made the subject of complaints.

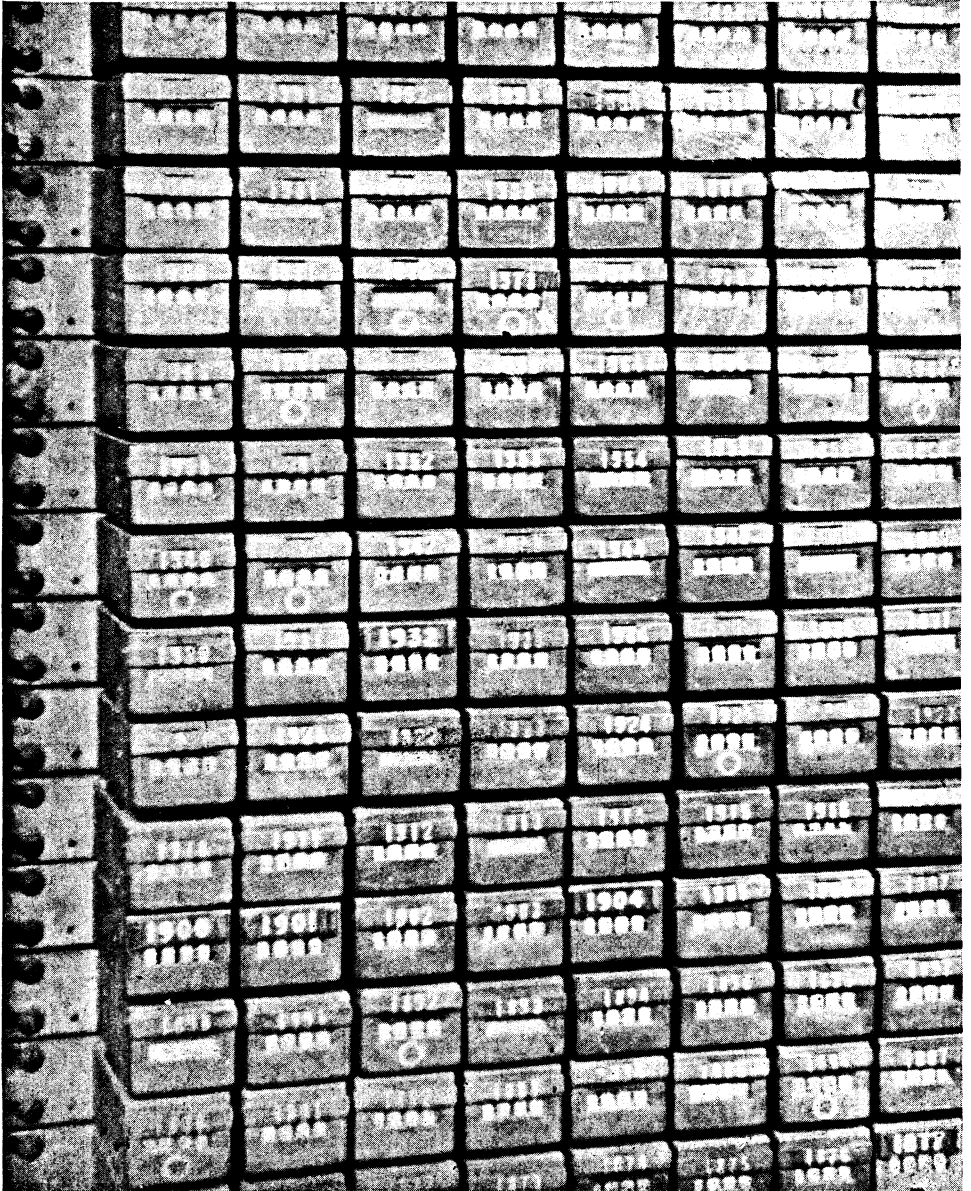
It has been cynically said that one is always told quickly enough when a wanted

used the telephone regularly has not had experience of being compelled to hear one of the stranger millions of subscribers asking another stranger to lunch, or to listen to some business conversation or impassioned argument. This constitutes one of the greatest annoyances of the telephone; at such moments one seems to be able to get in touch with every one of the subscribers to the system with the solitary exception of the number wanted. Why?

Exchanges are linked together by means of "junction circuits," which, as we have seen, reach the switch-room at the "B" switchboard. These junctions do not consist of a single wire, but of several pairs, each of which is repeated on the several positions on the "B" switchboard. It is therefore possible for the telephonist, through not hearing correctly or through careless-

ness, to hand a call on by means of a junction already being used for a conversation. In this way the caller is, so to speak, "tapping" the wire and listening in on the talk of others.

Now that we have followed the various processes entailed in effecting a telephone call, it is possible to see reasons for such annoyances as "wrong numbers."



THE ELECTRICAL REGISTER FOR "TALLYING" SUBSCRIBERS' CALLS.

As subscribers are now charged according to the number of calls, each has a tally, which automatically adds one to the record whenever a call is made. At a busy exchange there may be thousands of these tallies.

In the first place, the caller may not be heard correctly, owing to bad enunciation or speaking too loudly—"five" may become "nine," or numbers may be trans-

wrong connection made accordingly. Even when the number has passed correctly, the "B" operator may make the connection with the wrong hole on the switchboard,

MONITOR'S DOCKET.

No. 13

Date 10.4.6 Time 10:46

Ex. No. 9300

Called { By } S. 101.

Reported by Sub. Tel. Dist. Ex.

N.E.	J.E.	N.R.	C.E.	T.C.	D.A.	OC	D.D.
L.G.	BELL	C.C.B.	S.B.	H.B.	P.W.	EXT.	
CO.	C.G.X.	G.F.	CON.	INT.	N.	O.O.O.	W.N.
H.L.	N.O.M.	T.D.	N.S.	C.CL.	✓ CAL.	T.CK.	S.R.

for five minutes

Subscriber Advised

~~Satisfied~~ Not Satisfied

82

S. 557 WL 28411-1563 24000 pds. 12/10 J. T. & S. Ltd. T. B.

A SUPERVISOR'S COMPLAINT DOCKET,

On which are printed in code all the possible complaints and faults which the Telephone Controller can think of as likely to arise.

posed, such a number as 6872 becoming 7882. Even if the number is taken correctly by the telephonist, she may be misunderstood by the "B" operator at the exchange to which she is handing it on, and the

placing the plug in, say, 2302 instead of its neighbour 2301.

This telephonist has on the switchboard facing her 10,000 holes to choose from, yet normally her hand conveys the plug

to the required number in a flash. Of course the numbers are scientifically arranged in panels to facilitate this operation.

It stands to reason that a certain amount of the telephonist's time is taken up in collecting the money in public telephone booths; she has to wait for the three pennies to be placed in the coin box and signalled before completing the call. In the future this delay will be got over, a very great speeding up of the service throughout London being anticipated when the new idea in coin boxes in public booths becomes general. Under this new arrangement the requisite coins are placed in the box before the caller commences to use the instrument. In this way the caller has his mind—and his hands—free for the making of the call, and the telephonist does not have to wait whilst the coins are being inserted. People fumble with their pennies in the present-day booth, sometimes find the handle hard to turn, or drop their pennies altogether whilst trying to manage the instrument, a walking stick, a pair of gloves, and their threepence, thereby delaying the completion of the connection and keeping the telephonist in the exchange from attending to other calls.

With the new coin boxes in use, if the connection cannot for any reason be made, the pressing of a button releases the coins previously inserted. That the coins can be released in this way has not always been realised, as experience with the boxes of this kind now installed at Charing Cross proves. Later comers pressing the button to retrieve their threepence have been surprised by a shower of coppers, the property of those who have not read or understood the directions.

A few words must be said about the "Toll" system now being greatly extended around the Metropolis. It is often a matter of wonder why the "Toll" system of obtaining calls to distant places should be

so much more rapid than the former "Trunk" method.

"Toll" is the name of an exchange, as is "Trunks," but it is provided with a great many more junctions for the towns within the "Toll" area. Calls for any of these places do not have to be held up until a junction is clear, recorded on a docket to take their turn, but are put through immediately in the same way as if the call were for another exchange within the metropolitan area.

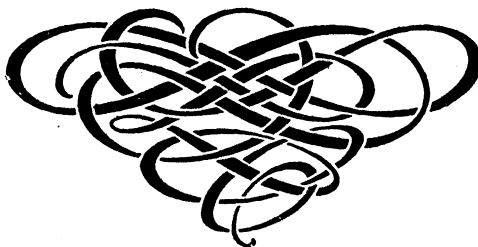
A description of the working of a modern exchange cannot be called complete without reference to that most important factor, the girl telephonist.

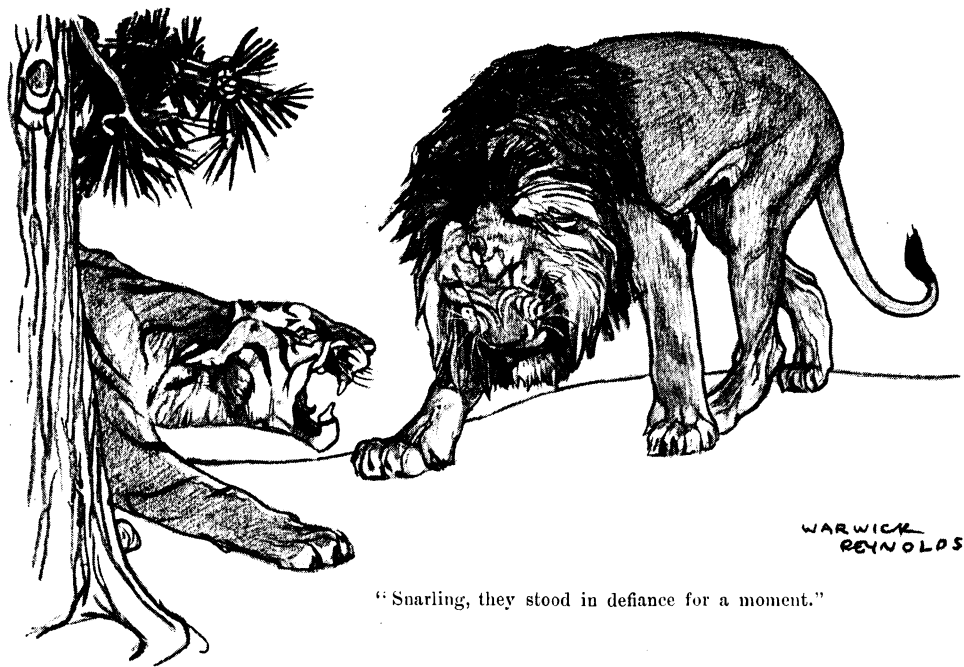
They can commence as probationers at the age of sixteen, going through a five to six weeks' training at an operating school. They are subject to a medical examination as to fitness for the work before being engaged.

Their hours are eight and a half per day, out of which is taken ten minutes break in the morning, forty-five minutes for lunch, and fifteen minutes for tea. In the exchange are locker rooms where the telephonists keep their clothes and their instruments. There are a restaurant and kitchens providing lunches and teas at low prices, a rest room, and a retiring room in case of illness. Every exchange has a medical officer attached to it, who can be called in by telephone in case of sudden illness of any of the workers.

The telephonists sit at the switchboard on high stools fitted with backs and foot-rests, and so sprung as to give to all movements of the body.

With regard to the amount of work done by the girls, there is attached to the switchboard a set of electrical registers, one for each position, on which are recorded the number of calls handled. By this means work is fairly allotted, and increase of traffic upon any portion of the switchboard noted.





"Snarling, they stood in defiance for a moment."

FRIENDSHIP

By C. R. COOPER

ILLUSTRATED BY WARWICK REYNOLDS

ABOVE their cage in the menagerie of the Grand United was something unusual for a circus. Under ordinary circumstances, as in the case of the giant Indo-China python across the way, or the two-horned rhinoceros which plodded about its massive den just at the edge of the elephant picket line, there would have been a flat piece of boarding decorated with gilded moulding and announcing the bare fact that this enclosure contained a "Nubian Lion (*Felis leo*) and a Bengal Tiger (*Felis tigris*)."

Such was the rule that was followed throughout the menagerie—and in all circus menageries, for that matter—the ordinary, common-knowledge name of an animal, supplemented by the Latin synonym, placed there with the instinctive psychological intent which every circus possesses. It's always more or less of a certainty that what the sign-painter doesn't understand when he gilds the letters into

place, the usual circus crowd will not understand either. And that which is not understood creates interest. The circus was the first psychologist. They even had a sort of ballyhoo in the days of Nero and the Coliseum.

But with this particular cage, conditions were different. Within it, pacing and passing one another in the narrowed confines of their steel-barred home, were a full-grown, black-maned Nubian lion and a Bengal tiger that was even larger. Other animals snapped and snarled at each other in their forced confinement and companionship. Other beasts fought and slashed about with their heavy, wickedly curved claws when feeding time came, and the animal men passed from one cage to another with their wheel-barrows of sliced horse-flesh. Other cats were merely named as so many sorts of jungle beasts, and the crowds passed them by with a glance. But before

the big den where the lion and the tiger made their home together, the crowds stopped and the crowds watched, and the crowds looked above to that sign which made this a cage distinctive in the big menagerie, and which simply said—

“DAMON AND PYTHIAS.”

That was all—until the next procedure, for there was something else unusual to come. Each day a little lecture platform was erected before the den, and when the crowd grew thickest, an animal trainer climbed the steps and, with an awkward sweep of a hand, faced the upturned faces beneath him.

“I ain’t any speechmaker,” he would say, “and I ain’t up here to make any ballyhoo. I just want to tell you a kind of a sweet little story about these here two animals in this cage, which we have named Damon and Pythias. I raised ’em both from cubs, and I take the credit for their good nature toward each other, because it was me that fed ’em both out of a bottle almost before they knowed they was alive.

“The lion is Damon and the tiger is Pythias. I named ’em that myself after that story about the two fellows that was such great pals. I might as well say right here that the lion and the tiger is natural enemies. Whenever you put a new lion and a new tiger in the same arena to train ’em and such, they’ll fly right at each other, and the tiger will go on his back and have the lion tore pretty near to pieces before you can get at ’em. That’s how these here two animals come to be together; their mothers was what we call working cats, and we took ’em into the arena too soon after their cubs was born. They went right at each other, and before we could stop ’em they was both dead. It was a magnificent fight, but it cost the circus two awful fine animals.

“Now, ladies and gents, as I have said, these here two animals’ mothers killed each other, and there wasn’t nothing to do but to raise the babies on a bottle. So I done it, keeping ’em together all the time, and here is the result. There never was two finer friends under any circus menagerie tent than these two beasts right here. They’re pals. One of ’em’ll fight for the other quicker’n a wink, and there ain’t a single trace of the jungle breeding left in ’em. Steve, hand me that there feeding fork.”

Up would come a steel rod from the hands of a waiting attendant, and Jenkins, the trainer, would turn toward the cage. A quick thrust, and he would pinion one or

the other of the beasts against a corner of the den, while the crowd gasped and while the animal roared with a sudden spasmodic call of fear. A thundering bellow would be the answer from the other cat, a streaking flash as a tawny form shot forward, tearing and slashing at the rod, his talons ripping through the air in short, ugly, circular sweeps, his big, heavy, yellow teeth striving in vain to rend the steel which held his comrade captive. Then the feeding fork would clank to the ground, and Jenkins, the animal trainer, would turn to the rest of his rote.

“All right, Steve, with the meat!” A long, red strip of horseflesh would be handed him then, and with his bare hands he would thrust it between the bars, giving one end to the lion, the other to the tiger, each beast receiving it with mincing mouth, as though fearful of injuring the human who fed them. Then they would stand, motionless and waiting, until the trainer’s knife should come forth, and the strip of flesh be severed in the centre, giving each a half. After that they would lie down together without a growl, without a single evidence of that selfish interest which is manifest at feeding time in every wild beast, each devouring his meal in peace, and in the security that his cage-mate held no envy and no selfish desires for more than his rightful share. And while they ate, Jenkins would face the staring crowd again for the conclusion of his lecture.

“That there is one of the greatest tests of friendship that one animal can show for another.” Jenkins’ knowledge of animals was far greater than his capacity for grammar. “If you’ll notice the usual cat-beast, he’ll roar and howl and claw for all he can get. But not these two. They’re pals, just like Damon and Pythias. And I wouldn’t be afraid to say that they’d die for each other. I’ve been around jungle animals a lot, and I’m here to say that they’re a lot like human beings in some ways. It just depends on how they’re brought up.

“These here two beasts was born in a cage and they’ve been brought up in a cage. They don’t know nothing else. There ain’t any of the teachings of the jungle left in ’em, and I wouldn’t be afraid to let ’em out right here, because I know they wouldn’t harm a soul, unless somebody tried to hurt one or the other of them.”

And then, as a finish to the lecture, while the crowd gasped and shrieked and milled,

Jenkins would unlock the door of the cage, pretending that he was about to loose the two animals, but, instead, invading their cage, to pet them and to display to the crowd their amiability. Catnip would come from his pocket, and he would toss a ball to each, then call attention to their ecstasy as they frolicked about the den like house-cats at play before the hearth. And such was the finish of the little lecture.

The crowd moved on to the ugly, pig-eyed rhinoceros, the slothful hippopotamus, wobbling about his tank and showing the interior of his big, barrel-like mouth, with its accompanying dental display, at the shouts of his keeper; to the coiled, ominous-appearing python, more vicious and evil-tempered than ever as it approached the day of its bi-monthly feed; and then, by way of relief, to the begging elephants and their peanut-loving appetites. It was always the same, Damon and Pythias first, then the rest of the menagerie.

For even the rudimentary knowledge of natural history which the usual circus crowd possesses was sufficient to tell the ordinary watchers that Jenkins, the trainer, had accomplished a little miracle in making real playmates of a lion and tiger. That he should instil into them a sort of feline love, which made one the protector and guardian of the other, was just as interesting, and there was every indication that the love would grow with the years, that Damon and Pythias would become even closer friends in their maturity than they were in their youth, that the soberer years—which come even to jungle animals—still would find them Damon and Pythias, one ever ready to fight for the other, ever ready to answer the call of pain and of pleading, ever ready to share with him to the last, to die with him and for him if need be.

But Damon and Pythias were caged, as they always had been caged since the first early memories of their cubhood. True, their younger days had seen the usual mauling about and trundling around the circus which is the lot of nearly every fluffy, yowling cub. But, nevertheless, that place they knew as home, that thing in which they first had understood what life meant and hunger meant, that place was a cage, with steel bars, with straw bedding on the floor, and warm wrappings of canvas above the boards on cold nights, when the den rocked in its position on the circus flat-cars. That was their native place; they knew nothing else.

Autumn had come to the Grand United, after its circular trip of the Eastern and Middle Western States and its short cut through Canada from Winnipeg to the little town of Fernie, snuggled against the gaunt Selkirks of British Columbia. The last sweep was beginning towards the south, cutting through Montana and into Washington, then on down into Oregon, on the way to Southern California, the blazing stretches of Arizona and New Mexico, and the winter goal of the circus in Galveston. The nights, even in that portion of the country where the Gulf Stream spreads its warming embrace, were beginning to bear the pervading chilliness of approaching cold weather. The mountain stretches, when the long circus train, screeching and clattering, turned and twisted over the passes, were sharp with cold. Summer was dying even in a land where winter never came.

It brought Damon and Pythias even closer together than ever. Through the long nights, in the darkness of their canvas-wrapped cage, they huddled against one another and growled contentedly in the comfort of their combined warmth. They endured the protracted runs of the circus trains—sometimes as long as forty-eight hours at a stretch, as the show skipped possible places that it might cover the "death trail" of small towns and smaller receipts as quickly as possible—with far less torment than the other beasts, for they were with each other, and during the feeding stops the animal men knew of one cage at least where the beasts within would not be vicious and evil-tempered as a result of the racking, seemingly endless journeys of thumps and bumps and rough road-beds. Damon and Pythias did not show their yellow teeth and leap against bars at their approach; they did not extend their claws and seek to rip the flesh of the animal helpers as they passed along the narrow edges of the flat-cars when the sideboards of the cages were removed now and then during the tiresome journeys to admit fresh air. They merely romped with each other, or lay cuddled, one massive head resting on a tawny belly, in satisfied disregard of all else but themselves. And so Washington passed into oblivion for another year, and Oregon after it, sending the train into the last leg of the death trail before the grape country could be reached, to be followed by the generosity of 'Frisco and the sure money of Los Angeles and its surrounding country. One more long, galling run

through the forest-clad hills, one more money-losing fight against time, and then would come a land of plenty. The circus trains started forward with canvasmen and "razorbacks" and roughnecks lounging in the open beneath the cages, singing and rejoicing in the rest that was theirs, storing up sleep against the days of work that were to come before the season should end. It was night and they snored—sleepier than usual, for the air was the pungent air of the firs which lined the track on each side, the forests that would not thin until morning and the advent of the trains into a new country.

It was midnight, and Damon the lion stirred suddenly, disturbing the heavy, striped head of Pythias which rested against him, raising himself on his forelegs and sniffing in the darkness. A quick movement and the tiger had joined him, sniffing also at something which neither could understand. The air suddenly had grown heavy and pungent; their nostrils stung slightly as they pulled the atmosphere into their lungs. Instinctively a growl came from the heavy throat of the lion, and Pythias the tiger answered. It was a growl of fear.

It was a new scent to them, a thing they had never known before; yet in some way they sensed the unusual, and began to pace their cage with a sudden, vibrant excitement. From far ahead, sounding above the rattling of the brakebeams and the grinding of the wheels on the curves of the mountain tracks, the locomotive shrieked suddenly with a message of warning. Nearer, other beasts began to yowl and roar. Faintly there came the combined trumpeting of the elephants in the big "bull cars" just ahead, then a bawling voice, as a staggering form thumped against the boarding of the cage and clung there a moment.

"Out of that canvas, you razorbacks! Everybody shake a leg! Wake up, there!"

Damon the lion cocked his head. It was the voice of trouble; even the animals of the menagerie seemed to be able to discern that tone. Scrambling noises answered, as men came forth from the cool, wind-swept "shake-downs" beneath the cages. Then the call of command again—

"Everybody forward to the extinguishers! Fire!"

"Fire!" answered a dozen shouts, echoing on to the next car.

"Fire!" sounded from far ahead, drifting

back to the flats from the top of the "bull" and stock cars ahead. "Drench that hay with water! Lay hold of them extinguishers!"

"Fire!" sounded faintly from the rear, where the sleepers of the performers and menagerial forces swayed at the end of the train. "Everybody out!"

"Fire!" roared the commander once more beside the cage of Damon and Pythias. "This here forest is blazin' over to the right! Comin' straight at us with the wind—no chance to back out. We've got to run for it! Everybody hop to it! Smoky—Smoky Davis, where are you?"

"Here!"

"Attach a hose to them two sprinkling cars upon No. 43. Wet down these six flats and keep 'em wet. Don't let none of these fellows run out on you—knock 'em cold if they look like quitting! It's cutting around in front of us, and we've got to go through!"

"And in back of us! Look there!"

Wheeling and turning in their cages, the lion and tiger sniffed again as the voices ceased for the moment. The pungent odour had grown stronger. Through the steel-barred air-vent beneath the driver's seat a dull red glow was beginning to creep, throwing strange shadows on the roof of the cage and causing the eyes of the beasts to show cattish-green as, with more anxiety than ever, they paced their small enclosure. The speed of the train increased; the cage rocked now with such violence that the animals slid and sprawled about the slippery straw, clawing vainly in their efforts to keep their feet. Then voices sounded again:

"Smoky, got that hose connection made yet?"

"Just finishin'."

"Stand by to souse every man with water when he passes. Make it snappy. Then turn to on these cars. Get me?"

"O.K. Send 'em on!"

"Ahead there, you guys! Into that water—take a good soakin'. Then up to them bull and stock cars! Three men stay here on these flats—Jim, Pete, and Henry! Aw-w-w-right! Let go!"

Splattering water and shouts, then once more the usual rocking noises of the train, which the lion and tiger had ceased to hear. Their whole attention was centred upon that red spot in the end of their cage, the bars showing black and solid against the glow, the gleam now displaying slight wisps of smoke which trailed in with

the rushing breeze created by the progress of the train. The two beasts began to leap, scrambling and twisting as the jolting of the train caused them to lose their footing, and their roars were those of terror. The scent of fire, and the menace it carries, is as instinctive to the beast as to the human. Something was closing in upon them—what, they knew not—something to be feared and fought against. Yet there was no fight possible.

For the first time in their lives they beat against the bars of their prison, just as every other animal on the long train was doing. They clawed at the steel standards, swaying side by side, yowling in chorus, hissing and bellowing, their sharp-clawed paws tearing forth in unison in a vain attempt to break through to the solid hickory boarding which lay beyond the steel. From without a crackling roar was beginning to make itself heard. A few sparks drifted in at the little opening at one end of the den. The shouts which travelled along the flat-cars were wilder—men were cursing and screaming. The whole interior of the den was bright now with a red glow that seemed to float upon and mingle with serrated lines of smoke which lay heavy about the panic-stricken beasts.

Water dripped from the ceiling, following the intermittent splashes from without. The heat grew more intense, the air heavier. Damon and Pythias were breathing with their mouths open now, spasmodically, jerkily. Their nostrils seemed to have closed; long ago the tender membranes had rebelled against the fumes of the flame, and had swollen to a point where breathing was almost impossible. The bars of the cage, as they clawed them or fell against them with the lunges of the train, were strangely hot, in spite of the water which seeped through the interstices of the boardings. Their roars became more like cries—the weird mouthings of some human in wordless distress, echoing back the like noises of cage after cage of frenzied beasts, and the trumpetings of the elephants, which in their big cars ahead milled and plunged and threatened the safety of the whole train; of the stock cars farther on, where horses, terrorised, were stamping and kicking and almost screaming in their fright; of the humans, alone aware of the real danger they faced, yet almost as powerless as the beasts themselves.

Fifteen minutes! Damon and Pythias began to stagger from the heat and from

the dense air. Far in one corner, where the straw lay thickest, an ember fell and broke into flames. Instinctively they leaped upon it, slapping it with their great paws, biting at it in spite of the burning pain as the flames touched the tender membranes of their mouths, pawing and scratching, until at last it lay a blackened, harmless patch in the red light. From the leopard cage just beyond suddenly sounded the cries and yowls of combat—the limit had been reached for the cat-like beasts within. They were fighting to the death, driven onward to kill by fear. Damon and Pythias heard. The very nature of the cries told them that cat-teeth were tearing at jugulars, cat-claws rending at cat-flesh. But that was all. They did not follow the example.

Hotter—hotter! They began to weave from suffocation. The light grew brighter at the vent. Water was coming less frequently now. The shouts of the men sounded farther and farther away. Once, as he lunged, Damon dropped against the bars at one side of the cage, only to pull suddenly away with a hissing growl. They had seared his flesh, and almost simultaneously the reason showed in a gnawing hole of red which appeared in the boarding. The cage was afire—it had been afire long enough for the flames to eat through the heavy hickory boarding which surrounded the bars on every side. A few minutes more, and the end must come. Then, with a jolting crash, the train stopped, and the shout of authority once more broke forth:

“Animal men, open up them cages! No chance to run the wagons off—they’re blazing! Hurry up!”

“How about the bull and the stock cars?” Apparently an assistant was waiting for orders.

“Forget ’em. They’re all right. Going to cut ’em off from these flats and unload the stock down the runs. It’s these animal dens I’m afraid of. If the fire eats through them cages, it’s all off. Come here! Up on those flats and tear off that boarding wherever you can get at it. And open the end doors—let that menagerie stuff out! Come on—gimme action!”

And from farther away:

“Show some speed with them shifting dens. Hurry ’em up. Stand by with ropes and feedin’ forks. We’ll cop off the most dangerous of ’em as they come out, and let the others beat it until morning before we round ’em up. Spread out, everybody! Jenson!”

"Yea-a-h."

"How you fixed to handle that rhino if he comes out?"

"Rotten! Need all the help I can get."

"Aw-w-w right. I'll give it to you. Ten men to help Jenson, and step lively. Hey, over there by the train, what's doing?"

"Starting to open up. No chance to run these wagons off. Have to prod the animals out and take our chances! Look out, there—here comes the hip!"

And just then Damon and Pythias stopped in their leaping to stare. The crashing of

axes had sounded against the sides of their cage; now one great section of blazing boarding had dropped away, to reveal to them the scene about the burning train.

Far in the background lay the inferno through which they had passed—the writhing, twisting flames of the forest fire, circling and evil, outlining the blackened trunks of trees and hemmed in, it seemed, by the dark-red cloak of smoke which billowed above. Closer—at the very next cage, in fact—flames were eating at the canvas and inflammable moulding in a dozen places. On the flooring of their own den small, licking spurts of fire were creeping towards the scattered straw, and they hissed at them in aimless fear.

Out in the clearing beside the track were horses and elephants and the other led stock of the menagerie, struggling and milling in fear as the ring men and the menagerie workers sought



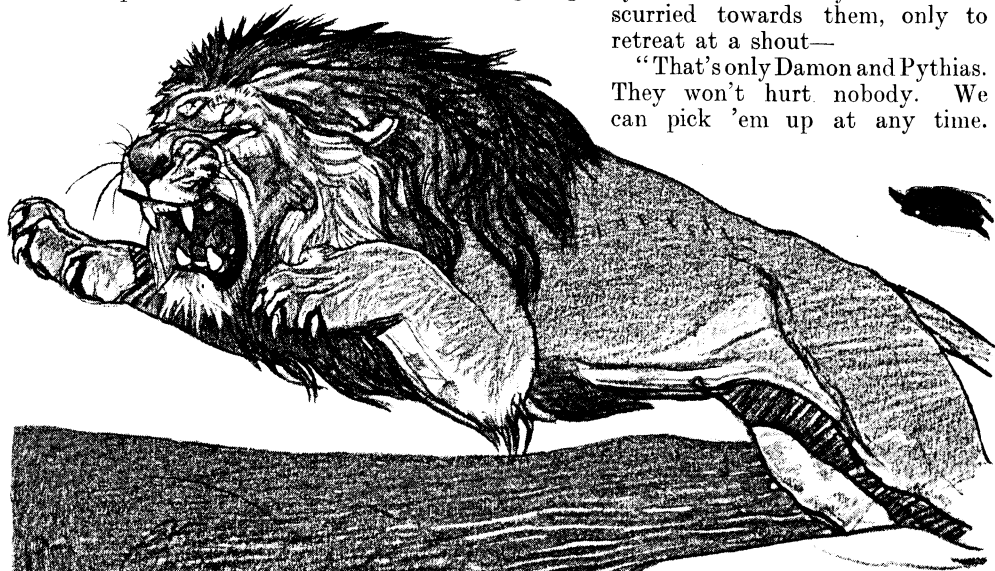
"Its every atom of strength appeared to centre suddenly for the final spasms of pressure that would reduce its victim to a crushed, maimed, shapeless death."

WARWICK
REYNOLDS

to tether them for the night. Nearer were circles of men armed with ropes and guns and feeding forks, surrounding the lubberly hippopotamus as it ran dazedly in an attempt at escape. Then the cat animals began to come forth, and with them the sinuous form of the thirty-foot python as it dropped from the burning train, writhed in pain for a second as an ember

spitting sharp pain into their nostrils and open, dripping mouths. They whirled quickly. They leaped. A tremulous second in which they hesitated before the flames about them as they reached the flat-cars, then, as the shots came again, they leaped clear into the soft grass of the open meadow which skirted the railroad tracks before giving way to the forest beyond. Forms scurried towards them, only to retreat at a shout—

“That’s only Damon and Pythias. They won’t hurt nobody. We can pick ’em up at any time.



“It was then that the lion sprang.”

Come on over here and help corral this rhinoceros !”

The way opened before the pair, and they trotted, somewhat fearfully, side by side across the clearing. Where they were going or why, they did not understand. All they knew was a sense of relief from the heat and smoke of the burning train, and a distinct feeling of uncertainty as they made their way onwards into a world utterly unreal to them. For the first time in their lives they were moving in unbounded space, unhampered by bars of steel ; beneath their feet was rough stubble interspersed by cool grass, a thing they had never felt before. The strange forms of trees and shrubbery were all about them ; they moved close to one another, and shoulder to shoulder they instinctively evaded them, hurrying away from the glare of the fire and farther into the woods.

Here they together stopped and sniffed cautiously before moving onward. Then they progressed again, holding to a slow, even dog-trot, moving ever away from the

struck it, then, squirming frantically, evaded the gingerly efforts at capture and slid into the cool woods beyond. A clanging sound. Damon and Pythias stared in wonderment. The door of their cage stood open !

They huddled away from it for an instant in sheer amazement. A drenched form appeared at the open side of the cage and shouted at them, then jabbed towards them a feeding fork. They fought it, as they were wont to fight it in the menagerie, only to curl back in sudden terror. Flashes had come from a blank-cartridged revolver,

flames of the circus train and those of the forest fire in the distance.

Other animals moved also, but Damon and Pythias took little notice of them. A deer clattered past, scampering far to one side as it saw them, then crashing through the underbrush in a panic of fear. Smaller animals—rabbits and field-mice—dodged almost beneath their feet in a rush for safety that had lasted ever since their sensitive nostrils had first caught the scent of flame. Damon and Pythias looked upon them only as surroundings, nothing more. Their natural food during their whole life had been freshly-cut strips of horseflesh; their home a cage; their throats had never given forth the bellowing feline call of the hunt.

An hour went by, during which they moved steadily and swiftly in spite of their jogging pace. The lights of the distance dimmed, as the forest fire, breasted suddenly by a stiff wind, found further destruction blocked, and turned to burn back over the *débris* of its swift, leaping progress. The extinguishers and water tanks of the circus mastered the blazing flat-cars, leaving only charred blackness where once had been paint and gilt and finery. Damon and Pythias, caged beasts all their lives, suddenly awoke to the fact that they were in the comparative darkness of an unknown world.

The tiger growled uncertainly, and was answered by the lion, as they slowed their pace into a gliding, sinuous walk, travelling now into the denser woods, which skirted a smooth-flowing river. The air was cool here, and moist with the mists from the sweating stream; the beasts shivered slightly, then, stopping, instinctively huddled their heavy heads across each other's necks. One crouched, then burrowed into the soft leaves of the forest, as he was wont to burrow into the straw of his cage. The other joined him. They slept.

Only to waken with sudden sniffing. But there was nothing wrong; no enemy approached, no fire threatened. The blackness of the sky gradually was giving way to the lighter shades of dawn, birds were beginning to chirp in the branches of the trees, squirrels to chatter. For a long moment they merely lay in their beds of dead leaves, sniffing cautiously, wonderingly. Then swiftly the tiger, as though from an impulse he could not understand, leaped to his feet, crouched and, extending his neck, scented towards the distance with a tensening of the muscles he never before

had known, with a shifting yet set glare that was new to his feline eyes. A gliding sound, and Damon the lion was beside him, scenting also, apparently forgetting for the moment his striped partner of the caged past. His jowls contracted, showing his yellow teeth. He hissed, and the hiss was answered by the tiger. Friendship was gone!

From somewhere in the distance, borne on the fresh breeze of morning, travelled the scent of the kill. It came from back at the circus train, where tired animal men, after a sleepless night, had dragged forth the bony, sway-backed "killers," or condemned horses, useful now only as food for the carnivorous animals, slain them, then hung their carcasses where the morning wind might carry the scent to the strayed beasts of the menagerie. It came from civilisation, from the land of the steel bar, the cage, and the feeding fork. But out there in the forest Damon and Pythias did not, could not know.

Again they hissed, one at the other. The tiger, with white-fringed belly sagging low against the grating leaves of the forest carpet, shot forward, then stood poised a second, his head slowly moving from side to side, the saliva beginning to drip from his heavy teeth. A form moved close to him, that of Damon the lion. The tiger's slow-turning eyes grew venomous, ugly wrinkles appeared about his mouth and nostrils. From his throat came a growl of slow warning, and in answer came a rumbling, gruff answer of defiance. Pythias the tiger went forward.

For a long moment the lion waited, watching the tiger as he took the scent, following it swiftly, silently. Then, too, Damon started, working even faster than his opponent—soon to come abreast of him and snarl as he passed. No longer were they the friends of the menagerie, no longer the "pals" that the ungrammatical trainer had lectured upon. They were free now in a new world that for some strange reason had grown old and familiar overnight. Instincts which had lain dormant in them since birth were coming to life—they were stalking a scent without knowing why they did it. They hissed and snarled at one another with a sudden innate enmity born years before their own birth, back in forests such as this, where there was but one law, that of the tooth and the claw. Together in a circus cage they had endured, without a thought of dissension, even the danger of death by fire. But now, in the open,

the jungle breed had leaped to life, and the caged man-made beast had fallen before it. Jungle cats they had been in physical appearance only, one in his stripings, his white belly and fleck-tipped ears; the other in his heavy, black mane and tawny coat. Now they were jungle cats in something more—in brains!

The mists circled above them, as the mists circle from the Victoria Nyanza in a land where the swiftness of the zebra is all that saves him from the crunching jaws of feline beasts, where the hippopotami wallow through the saw-weeds at the river's bank, where the trees are alive with the flamboyant plumage of myriad birds, where the mandril screams and the koola-kamba sends its weird cry echoing from the baobabs, where life is primitive and the rule of existence the rule of power. Giant ferns arose in their paths; they skirted them by a natural detour which they followed as they followed that scent—by instinct. Separated now by a distance of some ten feet, their eyes turned constantly in the direction of each other, and they were eyes that were green with hatred and with malice. The growls came more often; they hissed almost constantly.

A hundred feet farther and their paths converged again, hemmed in by the jutting approach to the narrowest spot of a small stream. They halted, each with a claw-fringed paw half raised. Then cautiously the lion started forward once more, to be stalked, step by step, by the tiger. Again a halt, again a start. The muddy approach narrowed. Now they were within three feet of each other. Snarling, they stood in defiance for a moment, then simultaneously they leaped.

It was the lion's advantage at first. The tiger had been caught in mid-air, and half turned about, alighting on his forefeet and scrambling there wildly as he sought to twist out of the clutch of the black-maned cat before the heavy jaws should find the spot they sought. Almost straddling the striped beast beneath him, Damon, his heavy jaws parted in momentary anticipation, followed quickly the twisting neck, the bobbing, darting, snarling head of the tiger, failing in his object, recovering, then struggling to reach his goal once more. The lunging body beneath him was held fast, with the exception of one darting, swift-striking paw, which cut at him time and again, seeming almost to jerk itself from its sockets as it strained for the vitals of the

beast above. Then the lion's eye suddenly centred, and his head went forward with a vicious snap of the jaws. He missed!

And in missing he lost his fight. In that one great lunge the lion had shifted the burden of his weight for just an instant, but it was enough. A quick swerve on the part of the tiger, and the lion was thrown momentarily clear of him. Swiftly the striped cat went to his back, his natural fighting position, head close against his heavily-muscled shoulders, spine curved, legs doubled in protection of his vitals, and every claw ripping death. When the lion returned to the attack, it was to drive madly, almost dazedly, into a hail of blows which slashed at him like steel scythes, to strive in vain to find an opening for his crunching jaws, to feel his breast, his throat, his cheeks and jowls torn and lacerated, to be blinded by the blood which suddenly began to flow from his forehead, to fend and parry and snap in vain. His was the loser's battle now, but he fought on.

Pythias the tiger was on his own ground and fighting with his own weapons. The greater strength was his, the swifter movement, the rarer acumen in the thrust and counter of the swords of the jungles, five to each extended paw.

Madly the lion roared. Just as madly he attacked, only to retreat again. The tiger wasted his breath only for a hissing snarl, which seemed to come from an open throat, flanked above by evil jaws ever waiting for the approach of flesh. Ripped and torn and harried, the lion swerved first from one side to the other, then, with one last frenzied rush, he closed his eyes against the curtain of claws, gathered himself for a spring that might mean suicide, and with all his strength and all his weight plunged upon the bunched form of the tiger, and by the sheer force of his attack beat back those claws for the tiniest part of an instant, and in that instant his jaws found flesh.

Nor did it matter that the heavy teeth had sunk themselves into the bunched muscles of the tiger's breast, that the point of attack was not vulnerable. Damon the lion was past caring for anything now except some momentary respite which might allow him to recuperate his strength and gradually work towards the neck above, with the windpipe and jugular which it shielded. Grimly he hung there, while the spraddled forelegs of the tiger, sprawled by his descent, slashed futilely at each side. Deeper and deeper and deeper the lion sank his fangs,

searching for bone that he might crush it. Mincing, then, he held ever so lightly to the point of attack, shifted his head from side to side to pull the attention of the tiger, and then with a darting blow, as Pythias left an opening, shot forward to the death-grip.

But the tiger moved also, swiftly enough so that the teeth of the lion caught only the skin of his neck. The hide pulled far to one side, stretching from his shoulders and ears in outlandish fashion as it gathered every loose inch that the covering of the body possessed. It gave a chance for leverage. The tiger whirled, he tossed frantically a moment and came to his feet, while the lion still clung to his hold.

A leap and Pythias went forward, dragging the growling lion with him. A straight plunge—aimed only at some vague possibility of escape—a form which showed dizzily before him, then a crash. They had catapulted straight into the trunk of a tree; the throat of the tiger suddenly was freed from a great weight as the striped feline himself turned a complete somersault to a scrambling descent ten feet beyond. There he whirled, fenced viciously at the blank atmosphere a second, and halted. At the trunk of the tree the lion lay motionless. He had struck on his head.

Sniffing, cautious, Pythias, the victor, returned. With stiff-legged, stalking steps he circled the conquered beast, first one paw, then the other, ever raised for instant defence. But Damon did not move. The lungs still pulled hard at their panting task, here and there a muscle twitched, but it was not for Pythias to see this. His circus friend—and jungle enemy—lay prostrate; that was enough. The head of the tiger went high. He roared again and again with the cry of victory. Then, as the breeze freshened, he sniffed once more towards the distance, and crept forward again on the scent.

Twenty feet away lay the stream, and he approached it with mincing steps. The soft wet touch of the mud brought up immediately the feline hatred for water, and caused the tiger to hesitate. He flipped one paw gingerly and hissed with his dislike for the touch of the fluid. He half turned, as though seeking some other means of crossing the barrier which lay before him. But there was none, and he twisted slowly back to his original position, only to yowl with a note that was almost a scream—the shriek of a beast in transfixed terror. He doubled into the mud beneath the

impact of a crushing weight, he sprawled there a moment in grisly, quaking paralysis, unable to flee, unable to co-ordinate his fighting faculties into a means of defence—a flattened, nerveless wretch under the attack of a slimy, sinuous monster which had dropped upon him from the projecting branch of a tree above, which had thrown him off his guard by the suddenness of its descent, which already had slipped its head under his throat, glided suddenly about him, and, with the great muscles of its round, gleaming body, had raised him that it might coil again. The python! It, too, had answered the nativity of the jungle breed; it, too, was fighting for the thing which lies uppermost in the mind of every wild thing—the food with which to sustain life—and it mattered not that its victim should battle against it with every weapon of the feline strain.

The fending attack of the tiger's claw shot upwards, to bring a swift answer. The python doubled in true obedience to its constrictor instincts—it seemed to twist in the air—then the foreleg of the striped cat lay helpless in its coils. The rear haunches of the feline straightened. They raised. They sought to scramble from the consuming embrace of the great serpent. Then they, too, were stilled. The darting black-and-yellow head of the beast fought vainly to grasp in its jaws the slimy, mottled form which was closing in upon it. In vain. Inch by inch the coils closed in on the neck, throttling the blood in the heavy, distended veins, drawing tighter and tighter against the struggling muscles which still pulled air into the fevered lungs. The tiger roared—first in a dying defiance, then in a trailing note of agony. A rib cracked under the serpentine pressure. The cry took on even a more pitiful tone. Back somewhere—miles away it seemed to the bloodshot, bulging eyes of Pythias—a form moved as though in answer to the call. He yowled again, screaming with almost human intonation, and the form in the background moved again. The coils tightened with greater strength than ever, centring on the shoulders and breast of the imprisoned beast, drawing closer, closer.

A call came from the throat of Pythias the tiger that for hours had been forgotten—a call that went back to straw and steel bars and a feeding fork in the hands of a trainer—and with that call the figure beside the tree trunk came to its feet, a bloody, staring-eyed thing, which rocked dizzily for

a second, which started with hazy uncertainty in the opposite direction, paused, turned, then, as if in a final struggle to collect its faculties, stopped short and listened. Once more that racking, piercing cry came from the throat of the tiger as new coil was thrown about it and the constriction became greater. The ugly mottled head of the python was darting close now, saliva flowing freely from the curved mouth, where the red, worm-like tongue exerted with greater and greater frequency. The breath pulled hard in the lungs of Pythias. Once more, and for the last time, he found the strength to give that instinctive cry of home and of civilisation, and the tottering lion heard.

A clumsy staggering turn and he had started in the right direction. Limping, weaving, he swayed for a second, his blood-crusted eyes watching the head of the python as it moved in unison to the constriction of its smooth, rounded muscles. A claw was raised uncertainly and lowered. The fangs showed. A step nearer crept the lion, hesitated, then came even closer. But the python did not notice. Its beady eyes were eyes of iridescent flame now; its whitish-red mouth opened slightly, displaying the few rudimentary teeth which differentiated it from the comparatively harmless, rat-eating, hut-loving true boa-constrictors of the southern continent. The pits beneath its orbits seemed to puff and fill. Its prehensile tail swerved with increasing viciousness. Its every atom of strength appeared to centre suddenly for the final spasms of pressure that would reduce its victim to a crushed, maimed, shapeless death. And it was then that the lion sprang.

Vaguely, as though fighting a thing he did not understand, the beast pawed and tore with his claws at the rounded body, causing it to writhe beneath the sabre-like incisions. Blood began to flow—a coil loosened. The eyes of the serpent took on a staring appearance of distress. The jaws of the lion opened and closed—upon flesh—and the coils loosened more than ever. The tail of the serpent twisted high, then flattened suddenly downward in an effort to smash the attack of the new defender, only to miss. Wildly the lion scrambled to

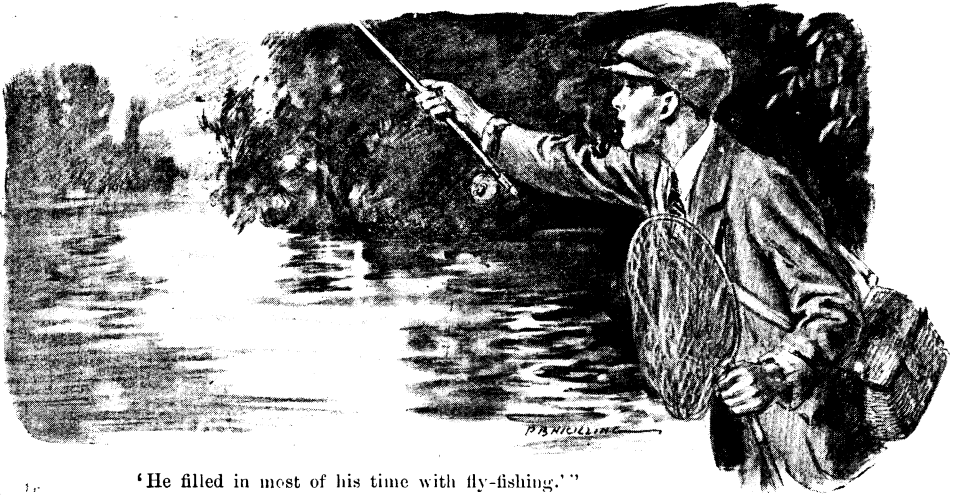
avoid the blow, and in doing so he came close to the head of the serpent, and with almost dazed eyes he watched it as it moved swiftly, sinuously forward and back, to one side, then the other, as it strove to find some means of engulfing both the old victim and the new enemy who had come to that victim's assistance. It fascinated the lion. It caused his own head to twist and turn with its every movement. And then, like some dullard suddenly awakening to a self-evident thing, the lion roared with bellowing force and bared his jaws. The snarl came to his lips, the blood-reddened eyes narrowed, and then those jaws crashed home.

A writhing, horrible moment, in which the great serpent swept clear of the form of the tiger, in which it writhed and beat the soft mud into splattering slush, in which it flung itself high in the air in its final efforts to reach the thing which held it, but in vain. The lion's jaws crunched harder. At one side the tiger, yowling and hissing, limped and crouched and sought to pass the barrier of squirming flesh that it, too, might come to the attack. The serpent convulsed for the last time in an effort to reach its enemy. Then a tremor, and the thirty-feet length of the giant python was a thing without direction, so much twisting, gyrating flesh, without a seat of command. The jaws of the lion had done their work.

Swiftly, in spite of his weakened condition, Damon leaped and ran impetuously to Pythias—even as he had hurried to him in the olden, steel-barred days—and they plunged forward as if in a unison of fright. They swam the stream, and, on the other side, licked at their wounds and scars, whining the while. Then with a new rush of the wind they straightened. The scent again!

But this time they did not snarl. No growl came from their torn throats, no roar of defiance or of hate. Limping, half staggering, the tiger wincing from the pain of broken ribs, the lion turning his head slowly from side to side in the distress of his wounds, they went forward towards the lure of the kills by the circus train, side by side, shoulder to shoulder, friends, comrades, Damon and Pythias once more.





'He filled in most of his time with fly-fishing.'

THE FRONTIER OF ARCADY

By A. M. BURRAGE

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

THE cottage, like that in which the ill-fated Little Jim breathed his last, was a thatched one. It stood at the foot of a slope, almost on the edge of a little plantation of beech trees, and looked too old and quaint and beautiful to be true. Hans Andersen might have dreamed it, or it might have shaken off its snow and materialised from one of those unblushingly romantic cheap Christmas cards. Most of its long garden was in front, and it contained a hive for the honey-bee and the rows of beans so necessary, according to the Irish poet, to domestic happiness.

Vivian Newent was aware of its beauty even while he sprinted, but he was in the mood to regard a cow-byre as luxurious. April was being true to her traditions. Bright sunshine and a cloudless sky had lured him out without a coat. Now the sky was rapidly assuming the aspect of a coal-cellar at midnight. He had but scarcely recovered from a dangerous illness, and was not without prudence.

The little cherub whose business it was to

sit up aloft and keep an eye on his destinies was an excellent handicapper. The first drop, the size of a sixpence, fell at the same instant that Newent's knuckles connected with the solid little oaken door. There was no answer to his knock. Then his eye encountered a half-sheet of notepaper pinned to the door, on which was inscribed: "Kindly leave half a pint."

"This," he reflected, "refers either to milk or beer—probably milk. It also suggests that the owner or lessee of this sylvan retreat is not at home."

He knocked again. By this time the Clerk of the Weather had got his coat off, and was tugging at the string of the celestial shower-bath in dead earnest. He tried the little iron latch, and lo! the door opened before him. Newent struggled with temptation a moment, and then gracefully succumbed to it by stepping across the threshold.

He found himself in a living-room of surprising dimensions. A low, oak beam crossed the ceiling between a double row of

diamond-paned windows, and a glance told him that here, at some time, a partition wall between two rooms had been knocked down. The same glance assured him that the room belonged to no ordinary cottager.

The floor was stained and polished, and three real Persian rugs were spread out on it. The old furniture looked to be carefully chosen, and included four high-backed seventeenth-century Dutch chairs which, he rightly presumed, were ancient and valuable. The half-dozen pictures were all copies from the early Italian masters. He recognised a Lippi, the original of which he had seen in Italy. Beside the door by which he had entered a venerable grandfather slowly and impressively recounted his tale of time. On the high shelf above the open hearth were highly-polished brass candlesticks and Dresden china figures. Newent regarded his place of shelter with an air of definite approval.

"This," he reflected, "must be the very cottage which the little girl found when she got lost, only to discover that it belonged to two big brown bears and a little brown bear. Didn't know brown bears had so much taste. It isn't the cottage that belonged to Red Riding Hood's grandmother. Always as a child I suspected that old lady of having plebeian tastes, with a leaning to oleographs and anti-macassars. Besides, even before she went to her last resting-place in a wolf's interior, the poor old thing couldn't paint."

His roving gaze had encountered an easel standing up near one of the windows. Resting on it, in the process of drying, was a water-colour of Wixford Bridge. He went over to inspect it.

"Not bad," was his verdict, "not at all bad! Those trees, those children playing on the bank, there is a sense of design. She has been soaking herself in Watteau."

His thoughts taking that shape had used the personal pronoun without hesitation. Without being exactly aware by what process of reasoning he had come to the conclusion, he was quite sure that the cottage was inhabited by one person only, and that a woman.

"She's probably out painting now," he thought. "Query, will she hide up under a tree or come back in this?"

He went to one of the windows and looked out through the diamond-shaped panes. The sky was black all over, and every leaf in the garden shook under the lash of the rain.

"She'll stick under a tree until this is over," he reflected, "so I'm safe enough. Poor little thing, she'll come back half drowned!"

Kindly feeling towards her, since he did not know if the owner of the cottage were big or little, prompted the use of the diminutive. He was genuinely grateful to the lady who had unwittingly given him shelter. He did not feel in the least ashamed of himself for having thus walked uninvited into a stranger's premises. He had not yet shaken off a habit of mind acquired during the late war—that in times of stress anybody's dug-out was public property.

He sat down on one of the Dutch chairs, and, while good manners conquered an inclination to smoke, considered his position and how best he might repay the unconscious hospitality of his absent hostess. A little while and the way was revealed to him.

Poor little thing! The morning's sunshine had fooled her as completely as it had fooled him. There was no fire on the hearth. Presently, when she came in dripping wet, she would feel the need of one.

The fire was not laid, but all the materials, even including fire-lighters, were ready to hand on the hearthstones. He set himself to work, priding himself that nobody else could lay a fire with quite the same regard for common-sense principles. In this instance his task was simplified by the dryness of the pine logs, which the flames embraced with enthusiasm.

The fire was just beginning to blaze to his satisfaction when the latch clicked. He started up guiltily and stared at the door.

II.

THE door opened jerkily, and there entered, propelled by some invisible agency, a camp-stool, which dropped on the floor. An easel, a palette, and a waterproof portfolio entered next, with the slow, jerking movements of shifting stage scenery. There followed, behind this considerable impedimenta, a little lady in a mackintosh, dripping from head to foot.

Newent had assumed the disarming smile of the stranger who is about to apologise. On no account must the little lady be alarmed at seeing him there. He must tell her very quickly and quietly, and in his most honied accents, why he had been compelled to take refuge in her cottage.

But the little lady showed no sign of embarrassment, fear, or even annoyance.

She gave him a smile and a friendly little nod. Then, advancing, she stumbled over the camp-stool which she had cast before her into the cottage, uttered a muffled and ladylike expletive and leaned it against the wall.

"So you've lit the fire?" she exclaimed. "Oh, good!"

The greeting took Newent's breath away. The smooth speech he had prepared refused to loosen itself. Evidently she knew a sahib when she saw one, and had the good sense to see that necessity had driven him to this seeming impertinence.

"I thought," he said, "you'd probably come in wet through."

"Not wet through, thanks to my mac." She removed the dripping garment and stood revealed in a neat costume of grey tweed. "But one likes to see a fire in the wet weather, doesn't one?" She came forward, offering her hand. "How do you do?"

Meanwhile he regarded her almost dazedly. She was almost fairy-like in her smallness, very fragile and lovely, and reminded him of delicate chinaware. Vaguely he remembered old northern legends of witches who dwelt in lonely cottages and changed themselves into beautiful young girls for the beguilement of solitary travellers.

"It's so good of you to have come," she continued. "I'm sorry the weather's so wretched for you. Such a promising morning, too."

Newent murmured something. Having little time to think, he leaped at and caught an improbable conclusion. Evidently she knew him. Had some common acquaintance, knowing him to be bound for that part of the country, told him to call and told her to expect him. He could not remember, but had no time to give his memory fair play in the matter. The great thing was that an embarrassing situation was now tided over, and that here he was on friendly terms with no end of a jolly little girl. The next move was to employ low cunning in order to discover her name.

The little lady unpinned her hat and disclosed a wealth of silky light brown hair. The hat she rested in front of the now cheerful fire.

"Excuse me," she said, "I think I'll let it dry there. Would you mind lifting on the kettle? Thanks. I shall be able to give you some tea in a few minutes. I'm so glad you waited. It would have served me right if you'd gone away in disgust."

Newent smiled.

"The idea of such a thing never occurred to me," he said truthfully enough.

"You know," she continued apologetically, "living out of the world, one often forgets which day of the week it is. I kept on thinking to-day was Wednesday. It wasn't until the rain came on, while I was painting, that I realised it was Thursday and that you'd be here. That's why I hurried back."

They both smiled, but while her smile was dazzling, his was tremulous. After all, she had mistaken him for somebody else. The day happened to be Wednesday. As if to confirm the truth of this, she added—

"It is most awfully good of you to have come down, Mr. Harding. I know you must be Mr. Harding, of course, because I know both your partners quite well. It's a long journey to give a busy man. I might just as well have come up to London and interviewed you. Do sit down, and please smoke. I'm going to smoke myself."

Mechanically he obeyed her. He did not realise that now or never was the time to tell her that she had made a mistake. It seemed to him that things had already gone too far. He did not realise even then that confidences, to which he had no right to listen, were about to be poured into his ears. Who he was supposed to be he could not even hazard a guess.

Oddly enough, he was thinking all the time that the girl must be regarding him as a fool because he had so little to say. As a matter of fact, she was thinking that for a lawyer he was a nice, friendly thing—one of those pleasant, sympathetic people who just let one speak at one's leisure without a lot of irritating interruptions and questions.

"What sort of a morning was it in London?" she asked, tapping at a log with a long brass poker.

He tried to be as truthful as possible.

"It was—an April morning," he said, at which she laughed.

"That is what is called a non-committal answer in your profession, isn't it?" she asked. "It's the sort of answer I might have expected from you."

Then for the first time he realised that he was supposed to be a lawyer, and caught a glimpse of the real danger ahead. He did not mind acting a part in order to get himself out of an awkward situation, but he jibbed at doing so at the expense of an act

of flagrant caddishness. Somehow he must stop this girl from talking. Somehow——

"The sooner I explain things to you," said the girl briskly, "the sooner you'll get a grasp of the circumstances, and then you shall have your tea in peace. As I mentioned to you—or, rather, to the firm—in my letter, it concerns my brother Wilfred. He——"

Newent rallied himself. This must be stopped at all costs.

"Please," he ejaculated, "please listen! I can't let you go on. I don't know what you'll think of me, but I'm not——"

She interrupted him with a little laugh.

"Of course you're not in possession of the facts. How should you be? Please don't distress yourself on that account. The fault lies with us. I fear my brother and I have not been so confidential with the firm as we should have been. However, I can tell you all in a very few words. I am an appalling ignoramus in most respects, and what I really require from you is a little advice."

Newent gave vent to a little sigh and abandoned the struggle. The sturdiest conscience is open to argument when its possessor is sufficiently beset. Newent quietened his with a dozen smashing arguments. He had tried to explain to the girl that he wasn't this fellow Harding, and Providence evidently ruled that she should continue in error. It would only frighten and distress her if he persisted. The poor girl wanted a confidant. No harm in listening to what she had to say, so long as he kept his mouth shut afterwards. Besides, if she wanted advice, he was a man of the world and as competent to give it as any attorney. Disinterested advice, too—no fee-hunting. Deep in his mind he knew that it was all wrong, but, dash it all, why wouldn't she give a fellow time to think?

It is not the place of the mere narrator to accuse or defend. Let it be written that before he could utter a word she had plunged on.

"Briefly," she said, "I want to save my brother from becoming bankrupt. Apart from the ethical part of the question, our uncle would certainly disinherit him if he did. His income, as you know, like mine, is derived from capital firmly secured under the terms of the will. His income is, roughly, nine hundred pounds a year; his present liabilities something between six and eight thousand pounds. He will not

be able to handle his capital until seven years hence, when he arrives at the age of thirty. Any attempt to raise money on that capital could only be done with the knowledge and approval of the trustees, one of whom is the uncle I have already mentioned, so that is out of the question."

Newent nodded shamefacedly to show that he had followed her so far.

"Now," she continued, "as my brother seems incapable of helping himself, I want, if I can, to help him. You cannot be expected to carry everything in your head, so I'll remind you that my income derived from the same source is four hundred a year. I, too, cannot control my capital until I reach the age of thirty, unless—and here is the difference—*unless* I get married before that time. I might, of course, go to my uncle and ask him to lend me two thousand pounds—enough to keep quiet the most pressing of my brother's creditors—but I could not find a reasonable excuse for requiring so much money. My uncle would immediately guess that Wilfred was in difficulties. He knows Wilfred, and he knows me! You see the difficulty? That four hundred a year represents almost my entire income. I don't make more than a hundred a year out of my pictures."

Newent inclined his head again.

"You want," he said, "to borrow money privately on good security, but without the knowledge of your trustees?"

She inclined her head.

"Well," he announced, "it isn't going to be easy."

The answer seemed to depress her.

"Oh, but I thought it would be! Anybody can see the will for a shilling. They'd know that the security was there. What about those people who advertise in the papers and send one circulars? 'Small interest. No inquiries. No delay. Note of hand alone.' Surely they would be willing?"

He shook his head.

"You might raise a little money at about eighty per cent."

"Eighty per cent.!"

"Oh, whatever you do," he urged, "keep out of the hands of Rebecca and Little Ikey! Yes, they'd go to Somerset House and look at the will, and then they'd tell you they would have to cover themselves for the enormous risks they were taking. How do they know that your money is safely invested without making any application to the trustees? Besides, having seen the

will, and realised why you were anxious for the trustees to know nothing about it, they would exert the kind of pressure which is sometimes called blackmail. No, have nothing to do with them. If anybody has to borrow money in that very unwise manner, why not let your brother do it for himself?"

Her only answer to that was to shrug her pretty shoulders. Evidently her brother was a young man constitutionally incapable of doing anything for himself.

"I didn't know it was like that," she said, looking into the fire. "I'm not a business woman. We'd better rule that out, then. I suppose I shall have to get married."

"What!"

She looked at him with a tremulous smile of amusement. It seemed that the *naïveté* of his exclamation had touched her sense of humour.

"It isn't quite such a hopeless aspiration as you seem to think," she remarked.

"I didn't mean it like that," he said quickly. "I meant——"

She was too good-natured to leave him wallowing.

"There is somebody," she said, "who wants to marry me."

"There must be hundreds!" he exclaimed. "But——"

He came to another full stop, and this time she did not help him out.

"Exactly what do you mean by that 'but,' Mr. Harding?" she asked.

"I was going to ask an impertinent question."

"Ask it, then. I don't mind."

"I was going to ask you whether you wanted to marry the person you mentioned."

Her answer was not vehement, but it was uncompromising.

"No," she said.

He opened his lips to speak, but she continued again after the least pause.

"Perhaps," she said, "it isn't fair to discuss that matter, even with you. I do not want to marry him, but I might be willing to do so."

"To obtain control of your capital?"

"To save my brother. I am very ambitious for my brother, Mr. Harding. Oh, I shouldn't marry this man under false pretences. I should be as honest with him as I have been with you."

He got up from his chair and went close to where she was standing by the fire. Mentally he was bristling all over.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, in the tone he might have used to a child caught playing with fire. "You mustn't do that! It's appalling!"

She glanced at him, her eyebrows a little arched.

"To get married?"

"To get married for a reason. One gets married in defiance of reason. Oh, I'm not bothering about the man. If he's fool enough to take you when you don't care for him, it's up to him. I'm bothering about you: It's not fair to yourself. It's all very well to be business-like and cut out sentiment, but it doesn't work. Love isn't simply the stock-in-trade of poets and novelists—it's a fact. If you marry without love, you'll neither be happy nor deserve to be happy, and one's life's happiness isn't material for gambling."

She gave him a little keen look which had in it something of amusement and something of shame.

"You've queer views for a lawyer," she remarked.

"A lawyer!" he exploded.

"Then what am I to do?" she asked patiently. "You reject my two solutions to the problem. Have you any suggestions to make?"

"Yes. Wait a little while. If it's only two or three days—wait!"

She uttered a little ironical laugh.

"In case in the meantime I meet somebody I might marry for love?"

She spoke as if she expected him to laugh with her, but he did not.

"You never know," he said gravely.

"Will you wait a little while?"

The great kettle on the fire set up a plaintive crooning and attracted the gaze of both of them.

"Tea won't be very long now," said the little lady. "Do you like crumpets?"

"I love them," he said, "to distraction."

"Then would you like to help me toast some, Mr. Harding? We can return to the other subject after tea."

III.

NOTHING makes for friendship and understanding quicker than when two people take part together in some light and pleasant domestic duty, such as making toast. Kneeling together on the hearthrug, like two pilgrims before a shrine, he and she became conscious of a sort of intimacy which years of mere acquaintanceship might not have produced.

She knelt bolt upright, he crouching a little back, so that her flushed cheek was very close to his. He glanced at her side-long. Very soft and feminine and lovely

"I want," he said, "to tell you a little story."

"I hope it's nice," she remarked.

"It's one, at any rate, that I think you



"Kneeling together on the hearthrug, like two pilgrims before a shrine, he and she became conscious of a sort of intimacy which years of mere acquaintanceship might not have produced."

she looked. Surely she would not have the heart to be too angry with him! While his heart beat a little harder and quicker than usual, he decided to risk it.

ought to hear. It concerns a friend of mine named Newent."

"Not Vivian Newent, the architect?"

"That's the man. P'r'aps I oughtn't to

have given his name away at this stage. I didn't know you knew him."

"I don't. I've only heard of him. Everybody's heard of Vivian Newent."

"Really? Well, anyhow, Newent's not a bad chap really. He's one of those fellows who mean well and have a sort of genius for doing the wrong thing. Among the wrong things he did was to get a pretty bad turn of pneumonia which nearly blotted him out. When he was better his doctor ordered him away into the country, with a whole list of instructions for the betterment of his condition. It doesn't matter what part of the country Newent went to. He filled in most of his time with fly-fishing."

"One afternoon Newent looked up at the sky and saw that very soon it was going to rain like sin. He hadn't got a coat with him, so he left his rod on the bank and made a bolt for it in search of shelter. Just as it was coming on to rain, he found a cottage. He knocked on the door, discovered that nobody was at home, so he just opened it and walked in."

"It seems rather a frightful thing to do, but consider the circumstances. He daren't get wet through. His doctor had warned him that he'd better not have any more pneumonia just yet awhile. The cottage, he could see, belonged to an artist woman. Thinking she'd come in wet through, he lit the fire for her."

The toasting fork fell from the girl's hand and rattled on the tiles. Newent gave vent to a muffled cough.

"Go on," said the girl, with a little catch in her breath.

"Presently in comes the girl. Newent thinks he's going to get his head bitten off. To his relief, she mistakes him for somebody

she's expecting. He determines to let her continue in error, and make his escape as soon as possible.

"To his horror, though, she mistakes him for a partner in her firm of solicitors, and starts to talk about private matters. He tries to stop her. He really tries. But she's so charming that—that somehow he can't think clearly because of her. And she goes on. And he listens, determining, of course—for he isn't quite a sweep—that he won't tell a soul about what she's said. And he presumes to offer her advice—very good advice—"

The girl sprang up, her eyes suddenly bright with anger.

"Mr. Newent!" she cried.

He, too, rose up, but slowly, and stood before her, his head slightly bowed.

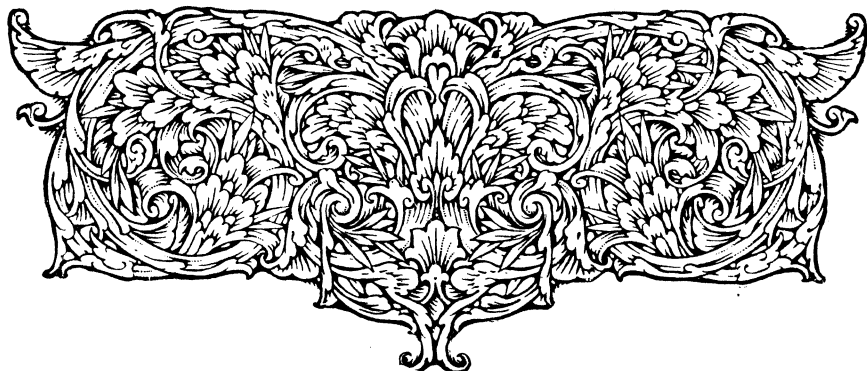
"Dear lady," he said, "I am in your hands. To-morrow you may expect Mr. Harding. To-day is Wednesday, not Thursday."

"It was hateful of you!" There was something like a sob in her voice. "It was abominable!"

"I know," he muttered. "I do not even know what sort of an apology I dare offer. But this I do presume to say—keep clear of moneylenders and loveless marriage. I—I won't embarrass you with my presence any longer."

He turned towards the door, and she stood still as a stone and as silent, watching him. Then, as his hand was on the latch, she heard a heavy gust of rain buffet the loose windows like a shower of gravel.

"You mustn't go yet," she exclaimed, finding the ghost of her old voice. "You'll catch your death. Be-besides, don't you—don't you like crumpets?"





“‘No, palm up, and behind your back.’”

“IT”

By RALPH STOCK

ILLUSTRATED BY STEVEN SPURRIER

AT the far end of Thursday Island's grass-grown main street the pigmy figure of a man appeared.

Doctor Seaton recognised it on the instant. He would have recognised it amongst a thousand others, for it was Wade—Wade in immaculate drills on shore leave. When he came abreast of the doctor's bungalow, he might glance in its direction out of habit, but, instead of dropping in for a chat and a smoke as of old, would pass on—to the Grahams'. There he would talk as he knew how, perhaps sing in his infernal light baritone, and generally captivate the assembled company for as long as he was allowed, returning to his lugger at last with an air of asinine content.

And why not?

Seaton had never found a satisfactory answer to that question. After a week—perhaps two—of trochas shelling in the neighbourhood of Torres Strait, who was not entitled to a few hours of the best there was in life—which meant Joyce

Graham? And after them, what man could help walking with lighter step and an air that some might call asinine?

At this juncture in his reflections Seaton was in the habit of mentally kicking himself and turning his attention to something else. The process had never been easy, though lifelong self-discipline had rendered it almost mechanical. Of late it had become increasingly difficult. And to-night—to-night he found it impossible. With Wade's approach and the welcoming glow of the Grahams' windows, the stage set for an engaging love scene under his very eyes, something went wrong with Seaton's well-ordered mechanism. It refused. Perhaps the controls were worn from over-use, perhaps . . . In any case, his thoughts took charge and carried him hurtling into the abyss.

Have done for once with everlasting, all-consuming deception, he exhorted himself. Away with the trappings of convention, and what remained? In his own case nothing

but the ugly truth that he loathed Wade. Never mind why. He loathed him, and would like to do him a hurt. It was nothing less than a reversion to the instincts of primeval man. Exactly. He, Doctor Donald Seaton, was such a man at that moment, and gloried in it. Instead of tamely watching your rival succeed where you have failed—for he it known that trochas shelling pays better than medicine in Torres Strait—you go out and kill him. He is in the way, so you remove him—or he removes you. What could be fairer, less involved?

Wade was quite close now, loping up the street like a centaur. He was in a hurry. Naturally. The Grahams' windows beckoned. The blood throbbed at Seaton's temples. He grinned. The notion was grotesque according to modern standards, but at that moment he was not a modern. He was a man. He would go out with a club and fight Wade for Joyce Graham in the main street.

He had actually moved—away from the window and across the room to where some Island weapons hung upon the wall—when Wade ran lightly up the verandah steps and entered without knocking.

"Doc!" he called breathlessly.

Seaton's hand, which had been outstretched, fell to his side.

"Yes," he answered mechanically.

"In? Good. Can I see you for a minute?" Wade came into the room without waiting for an answer. He was a small, spruce man, with a quick manner of speech and movement. "Sorry to trouble you, old man, but this is professional."

"Well?" said Seaton.

"It's rather a private matter." Wade glanced toward the open door.

Seaton shut it.

"Fire ahead," he said. "Won't you sit down?"

"No, thanks. It won't take a minute. I came to you because you're a pal as well as a doctor. Don't spare me. I want to know. What's that?"

Wade extended his hand palm upward. In the centre of it was a small, discoloured mark.

"Did it bleed?" Seaton asked.

"No. But it's not that—I *didn't* feel it."

Wade's quick glance searched Seaton's face for the effect of this statement, but none was visible.

"It went deep, and I didn't feel it," he repeated petulantly. "What d'you make of that?"

"It depends," said Seaton. "Hadn't you better tell me what happened?"

A frown puckered Wade's forehead, the quick frown of a short-tempered man.

"I don't see what that has to do with it," he complained. "It's results I'm after. What have I got? Can't you diagnose, or whatever you call it? That's your job, isn't it?"

Seaton regarded him with professional tolerance.

"Yes," he said, "it's my job. I should say you've had a jab from a gimlet or some other tool breaking through its handle."

"Yes, but——"

"Just lay your hand on the table," Seaton directed in his soothing monotone. "No, palm up, and behind your back, if you don't mind. Do you feel anything?"

"No."

"Now?"

"No."

"Stay as you are a moment."

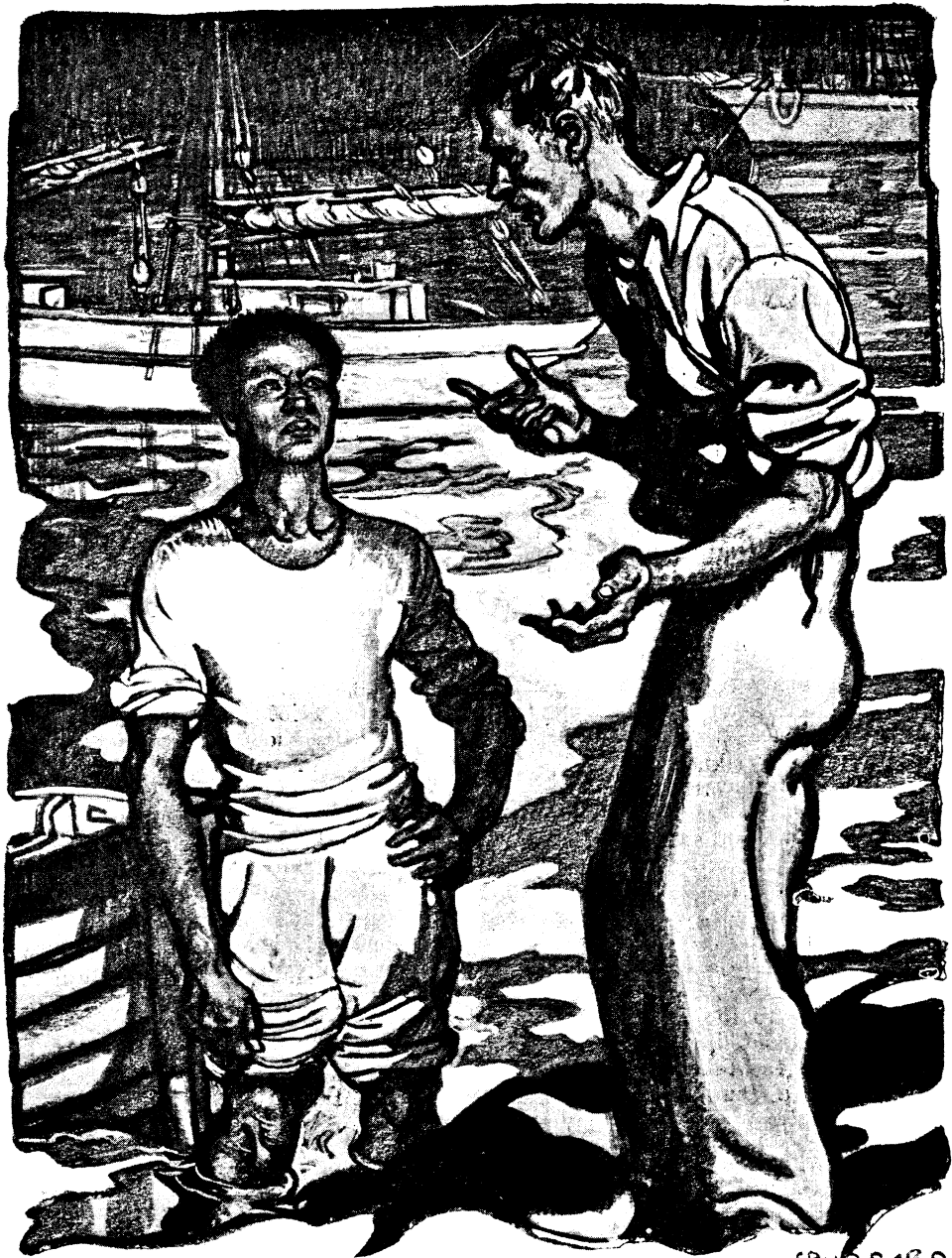
Seaton crossed the room and returned. A few silent moments passed, then he took a small square of glass, slipped it under a microscope, and switched on a powerful shaded light. His back was to Wade, but he could hear the other's slight nervous movements of suspense.

In a little while the examination was complete. Seaton knew all it was necessary to know. He looked up from the lens, and had half turned to speak, when the words were snatched from his lips and he stood staring through the open window into the night. Far off in the distant shadows there was a yellow glow, the welcoming glow of the Grahams' windows.

He became aware of Wade. The fellow was plucking at his sleeve, saying something. He wanted to know. It meant everything. Did Seaton understand? Everything! But how could a cold-blooded medico be expected to savvy that? Out with it! All Wade wanted was the truth. Why was Seaton such an infernal time giving it him?

Seaton turned. He did not speak. At the moment he could not. Wade stared into his expressionless face, then crumpled into a chair.

"All right." He sat beating his hands between his knees. "All right, you needn't say it if you don't want to. But you're right, all the same. I've got it—feel it." He shuddered visibly. "And never tell me or anyone else that it's contagious, but not infectious, and all that guff. You don't



"He was afraid the crazy white man who walked the beach at midnight, spitting interminable questions, would have to exercise the patience so foreign to his race and wait."

know anything about it. None of you do. Only the abos (aboriginals) know. Three nights I slept in that cursed hut, though it was *taboo*—three nights, over a year ago—and this is the result, this. . . ." Wade was on his feet, making impotent little gestures. It seemed that until that moment the full significance of his position had not reached him. Now, of a sudden, it had. Already

his eyes were those of the fugitive, the pariah.

It was Seaton's duty to report him, he pointed out with ironic levity: to have him sent South to join the others on their two by four island. Well, rather than that . . . But Seaton wouldn't do it. They were friends. Wade could get to China—couldn't he?—where they weren't so particular

about it. Or, better still. . . . Wade paused in his diatribe. It seemed to have occurred to him that he was saying too much.

"I'm off," he jerked out, and made for the door. It was a challenge, and Seaton neither moved nor spoke. "I'm going, and you won't try to stop me. You couldn't, anyway, but you won't try. And let me tell you this"—he raised a menacing fist—"anyone who finds me will die—*anyone!*"

With that he was gone. The door slammed, there was the staccato clatter of footfalls on the verandah steps, and silence.

Even then it was some time before Seaton moved. It was as though he had been hypnotised. But now it occurred to him to wonder what he had done. Just what *had* he done? Nothing, he told himself promptly. Wade, with his hurricane methods, had rendered all opportunity of doing anything impossible. And he had gone. He had removed himself, and wasn't that. . . .?

Seaton went out on to the verandah. Silence, he reflected—what it could do! What it had done for Wade—and himself. But his conscience was clear. He had said nothing—done nothing.

"Nothing," he muttered aloud.

The Grahams' windows still glowed in the distance, but, curiously enough, Seaton could not bring himself to think of them, nor even of what lay behind them. He was thinking of Wade. He could not stop thinking of Wade. . . .

That was why a little later he was tearing down the main street like a madman. The second turning to the right, a dim vista of tin stores and Chinese odours, brought him out upon the beach, where he stood in the sand, a gaunt, breathless figure, trying to shout. Wade's lugger lay at her moorings under the stars. She had not moved. There was no sign of her moving. Seaton's relief nearly choked him.

"*Malita!*" he contrived to bawl. "*Malita, ahoy!*"

After an eternity something moved on deck, came aft, and clambered into the dinghy. But it was not Wade. Why should it be? Naturally, it was his Kanaka mate, who leapt from the bows as the dinghy touched bottom, and stood knee-deep, regarding Seaton with amiable curiosity. Yes, his master had returned to the lugger, but left again almost immediately. How? In the whaleboat. Yes, he had taken things with him, and had set the lugsail because the wind was fair. Where was he going?

How should the mate know—or why, for that matter? It was none of his business. He was afraid the crazy white man who walked the beach at midnight, spitting interminable questions, would have to exercise the patience so foreign to his race and wait until the morrow. Were there not plenty of them?

That was not precisely what the mate said, but it was what he meant, and contrived to convey in vivid *bêche-de-mer*.

Seaton retraced his steps up the beach. He had no notion where he was going, but habit led him back to his own verandah, where he remained, staring before him with wide unseeing eyes, until dawn.

The following day elicited nothing. Wade was adrift on the Coral Sea by now, that was all Seaton knew. He pictured him at the tiller, steering for deep water with his awful knowledge as sole company. The little scene became etched on Seaton's brain. He could not erase it. He could neither sleep nor eat for it. Yet what had he done? Everything, he told himself viciously. There was no iota of excuse for what he had done. His thoughts took hold of him, worried him like a dog. And in the midst of them Joyce Graham called.

Did he know anything about Jim? That was what she had come to ask Seaton, and stood before him with grave, discerning eyes. The Grahams had been expecting him (Jim, of course), but he had not come. According to his mate, he had set sail in the whaleboat late at night for some unknown reason, and now, two days later, a pearling lugger had brought in the *Malita's* whaleboat. They had come upon it a few miles from the Barrier Reef, bottom up. . . .

Seaton heard no more.

"I killed him," he said slowly.

Joyce stared into his haggard face. Only the lips moved.

"I killed him," he repeated. "Of course, you would like to hear."

He told her all. In a dull monotone he stated facts without embroidery, without restraint. He might have been dealing with statistics. And when it was done he heard Joyce speak.

"Jim's hasty," she said.

"Hasty!" It never occurred to Seaton that she was seeking an excuse—for him; that she did not ask why he had done this thing; that instead of spurning him as something unclean, her eyes were welling with sympathetic understanding. "I don't think you quite understand," he went on.

"It was intentional. I wanted to get rid of him. I got rid of him. Hasty?" He gave a short laugh. "Of course he's hasty. That's what made it all the easier." He went to the verandah rail and stared down the street. "I must go and tell the police," he said shortly.

"Why? What good will it do?" Joyce's hand was on his arm. "As if they would understand—do anything that we can't do! Besides, I don't believe Jim's dead. He's not the kind to do that. The upturned whaleboat was a ruse. He's out there—somewhere." She waved a hand seaward. "Don't lose heart, Don. Don't give up."

Seaton turned on her, his dull eyes flickering to life. If only he could think that, too! If only . . . "Anyone who finds me will die—*anyone!*" That was what he had said. Did it sound like the threat of a man who would readily part with life? And the whaleboat. . . . The hurricane season was past, the Coral Sea like a millpond. . . . A trifle thin, that upturned whaleboat. . . .

"If you're right, I'll find him," Seaton said. "Oh, I'll find him for you!"

From that hour he was a man transformed. He had a life-work, a passion—which was to find Wade. Save for that, the world held nothing for Seaton, not even Joyce Graham, though without her he would have been helpless. She knew those seas, had sailed them as a child aboard her father's pearling schooners in the days of the floating station; and now, with charts outspread and little cries of recognition at isle and reef and pass, she and Seaton probed every possibility. The current set N.W. here, they found, which would carry the whaleboat S.E., so—and at an average of two knots for two days from—here, or hereabouts. No, some of the islets were too small to be named on the chart. It was a matter of sifting them as through a sieve, and for that the motor-boat would be necessary. It was Joyce's own, and she could take her anywhere. A cook and an engineer were all they needed. . . . She intended to come, then? Their eyes met across the chart. Who was Seaton to question such a decision? He must remember that she also was looking for Wade. It was his to work, nothing more.

He worked. His activities became gyroscopic. To cease them would have been to collapse. It was only the thought, the vaguest dream of finding Wade, that sustained his momentum during those feverish days and nights of preparation.

And with those that followed it was the

same. The boat sped through a pass in the Great Barrier as through a portal, into a world jewelled with islets, peopled with flying fish and seabird. And still on to the rim of this world, a desolate place of pale green shallows and dark blue depths, where islets dissolved into half-submerged, uncharted reefs, and it was only possible to steer by signal from a look-out in the bows, and to anchor when darkness fell.

Here, as the brazen days passed by with nothing more than bone weariness and disappointment to show for them, something of the futility of such an undertaking would have come home to most men. But not to Seaton. The flame of hope, lit and tended by Joyce Graham, burnt through every gust of adversity. He was looking for Wade. The remainder of his life was dedicated to the search. He would cheerfully kill himself—looking for Wade.

Such fanatical persistency was bound to lead somewhere sometime. It led Seaton to a far-flung fragment of coral, one of a small group and the same as a hundred others he had visited, but showing some sign of human life in the shape of a beached canoe.

He landed, and was soon surrounded by the little band of copra getters who periodically visited it. They had seen no one. Was it likely that they should see anyone, least of all a white man, here on the rim of the world? Seaton admitted that it was not, but continued patient inquiry throughout the day. It was a strange thing, he observed, that they should confine their labours to this island and leave its neighbour untouched. True, the other was smaller, but with his glasses he could see that its palms were laden with nuts, the beaches littered with them. How was that?

He was lucky to get an answer to such a question, but presently it came from one of the older school. The place was *taboo*. Why? Seaton did not ask. He was sufficiently versed in native lore to know that it might be for a hundred reasons, or for none. It was forbidden, that was all. Most likely because the spirits saw fit to inhabit it. Offerings were probably flung upon its shores by a quaking crew who immediately afterward paddled for its life.

"If the island were not sacred," mumbled the old man in an unguarded moment, "how should we have had proof?"

"Proof!" railed Seaton, with the binoculars to his eyes. "Where are your proofs?"

It was true the white man needed more than most, the old man admitted with

admirable tolerance, but for himself it was enough that out of this uninhabited land a thin ribbon of smoke had issued not long since, forming itself into the outline of a man——

His words had a surprising effect. Instead of waiting for the rest, which established the interesting fact that the man's outline had changed to that of a hurricane bird and flown away over the sea, his audience turned on its heel and departed as though chased by devils. In a flash it was aboard its strange craft and heading at incredible speed for the island that was *taboo*.

"None but ill can befall," wailed the old man, and had the intense satisfaction of seeing his prophecy fulfilled in the presence of his entire family.

Close to the distant beach the craft came to rest with a churning of waters, and a man leapt from the bows. He waded ashore and advanced over the sand, crying aloud. He was midway between the sea and a reed-brake when the spirits very properly showed their disapproval of the intrusion by smiting him where he stood. Of a sudden his lank white figure wilted on to the sand, and a faint sound like a distant clap of thunder—or a rifle-shot—came over the water.

That was all, or so the eye-witnesses of

the incident claim to this day, which is probably because they bolted from the scene of wrath. If they had stayed, they would have seen Joyce Graham kneel in the sand at Seaton's side, and a little later Wade appear out of the brake with a rifle under his arm.

"I warned you," he said, "*anyone!*"

Seaton struggled on to an elbow.

"Don't talk about it," he said faintly. "Shoot again if you feel inclined—but not before I've finished. It wasn't leprosy—just a local paralysis from the wound—nerves—and I let you go thinking *that*—to get rid of you—shoot again, old man——"

Then he lost consciousness, but there was a smile on his lips.

* * * * *

"There's only one thing I don't quite follow," said Wade, as the motor-boat headed for Thursday Island, with Seaton sleeping peacefully below. "He said he did it to get rid of me. There wasn't much need for that, was there?"

Joyce was at the wheel, her eyes on the swaying compass card.

"Was there?" he repeated.

Joyce did not speak, but Wade had his answer. He went forward, whistling.

LINCOLN'S INN.

IN Lincoln's Inn, in Lincoln's Inn,
There's just one thrush comes heralding
The conscious wonder of the Spring!
And tulips grow there, tall and thin,
In Lincoln's Inn, in Lincoln's Inn!

In Lincoln's Inn, in Lincoln's Inn,
How dull it is and wearying,
This legal jargon's jangling,
When Summer whisperings begin
In Lincoln's Inn, in Lincoln's Inn!

In Lincoln's Inn, in Lincoln's Inn,
The blood-red leaves go clambering
About the walls and mullioning,
And Autumn flames without, within,
In Lincoln's Inn, in Lincoln's Inn!

In Lincoln's Inn, in Lincoln's Inn,
Through fog and frost the echoes ring;
And London bells all chime and swing
With Christmas joy and Christmas din
In Lincoln's Inn, in Lincoln's Inn!

CLAUDINE CURREY.

THE OLD FIRM

By LAURENCE NORTH

ILLUSTRATED BY BALLIOL SALMON

WHEN the Old Firm became an institution in the village, the father of one of the partners invented the nickname. The Firm, long-legged and fair to look upon, disapproved vigorously, and it cost the Pater several boxes of chocolate to win back its good-will. For sweet and bobbed fifteen is apt to be touchy about its own dignity.

The Firm followed a special and peculiar line of business, or, rather, pleasure, for it was holiday time. And the business had nothing to do with commerce, but everything to do with sentiment. Fifteen is the age of violent romantic devotions impartially bestowed upon either sex, and the Old Firm's occupation was heroine and hero worship of a most deliciously fluttering sort, most secret, sweet, and precious, yet an open secret, for the partners' methods were ingeniously public.

Emily and Anne had their hands full. At the height of their activity they conducted at least four separate affairs, involving six persons in all, three men and three women.

There was the newly-engaged couple, the newly-married couple, the Curate and Miss Blythe—the last pair quite separate entities, adored for themselves alone and not for any romantic bond between them.

To do justice to all six taxed the summer day, which was hardly long enough for the Firm's engagements. The partners were to be seen from morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve, strolling about, arms linked and heads together, discussing, with the shy giggling rapture of schoolgirls, their most intimate concerns. They seemed to have the gift of ubiquity. You would lose sight of them at one corner only to run into them again as you turned the next. They were past-mistresses of short cuts and neat evasions, and in the art of cunning observation and of taking cover—necessary sometimes—they knew no rivals.

The utmost delicacy was required in the case of the newly-married couple. With

little Mrs. Garth they had fallen hopelessly in love, but as yet neither had got to know her, and the bliss of speech, the ecstacy of seeing the inside of her cottage—reputed “awfully dinky” since the fresh doing-up; it used to be nothing particular in the former tenants' reign—were still only food for dreams. But one always had the joy of watching Mrs. Garth's incomings and outgoings, of planning discreet encounters when one walked past her with conscious blushes and furtive glances, taking in the details of her new clothes at a flash—these thrills made life worth living. And one day acquaintance would come along. In so small a village they couldn't remain strangers for ever.

On one point Emily had the advantage here over Anne, for Emily's garden adjoined the Garths'. She had arranged a private peephole in the fence through which she could watch the divinity in her hammock. Anne could share this peephole now and then, but Emily had the pull. Sometimes Mrs. G. comforted herself with a cigarette, but never when Mr. G. was at home. He must be a little old-fashioned. Still, he was voted quite nice, and being Mrs. G.'s husband he came in for his share of attention. He had to be followed, at a respectful distance, to the station in the mornings. If you timed your approach properly, perhaps you could see him parting from his spouse at the gate. That was something. She called him Bunny. So did the Firm. And in the evening he had to be shadowed up the hill again. This was a fearful joy, for usually Mrs. G. went part of the way or all the way to the station to meet him. If you dodged cleverly, making skilful use of side-roads and running hard when out of sight, you might pass them once or twice before they reached their own door. Even modestly downcast eyes can see quite a lot.

The engaged couple, Fred Dymchurch and Marjorie Maitland, were old friends of the Firm's, and that affair was a little

less exciting, but even there one could get a fair run for one's money. That twilight, for instance, when Fred and Marjorie had a breeze beside the stile at the end of Long-meadow; but hush—Emily and Anne weren't tell-tale tits. It was a lovely secret, but nobody else in the village was a penny the wiser, and, after all, the sensation died young, for Fred and Marjorie seemed to have made it up next day. Rather disappointing to the Firm, in a way, for they had intended to be so double extra sweet to Marjorie while the tiff lasted. Their sympathies were all with her, for Fred had been *most* unreasonable. She had asked him how he liked her new hat, and he had said it was too dark to see it properly. And they had gone out for their walk, too, long before sunset. The Old Firm, shadowing the pair, knew the time to a second. Fred had had ages of daylight to notice the hat (the Firm spotted it a hundred yards off), but of course he didn't. What else can you expect from a man?

The shepherding of the Curate and Miss Blythe was quite a different sort of fun, altogether more personal to the Firm, for the Rev. William Hobhouse and Miss B., being unattached, were Emily-and-Anne's own private property. The Garths and Fred and Marjorie had to be shared, so to speak; Mrs. G. belonged to Mr. G., and *vice versa*, and the same applied to F. and M., but the Rev. Bill was a possession by himself, and so was Miss B. Emily and Anne never thought of them together, but took care of each separately.

Mr. Hobhouse had carried the two girls by storm as soon as he came to the parish. He was a *man*, stalwart, big-voiced, athletic; not a sigh and a smirk in a surplice, like his predecessor, the Rev. Athanasius Toop. Emily and Anne approved of Mr. Hobhouse at once, and accepted him as a pal. He had great gifts that way, and his topping service at tennis taught even Anne, who fancied herself at the game, a practical lesson in humility. When he started clubs for village boys and girls, he roped in the Old Firm to help to organise the Girls' Society. This meant seeing quite a lot of Bill, and much pleasant and important consultation.

Here Anne had the pull over Emily, for she lived within sight of Bill's lodgings, and knew his incomings and outgoings better, perhaps, than his landlady. By craning her neck out of her bedroom window Anne could just see Mr. Hobhouse's windows. These were at the front and

side of his dwelling. She knew when his blind went up in the morning, and to what hour his studious lamp burned at night. In spite of maternal rebukes, Anne advertised these matters to the household by a series of slogans—

"Bill's up back!" (meaning that his bedroom window was now uncurtained), "Bill shaving!" "Bill gone bath!" "Bill's up front!" (blinds up in his sitting-room), "Bill feeding!" and similar frank proofs of young female inquisitiveness. This power of personal supervision gave Emily stabs of envy, but then she had her own peephole to view dear Mrs. Garth, so it worked out about equal. And out of doors neither had any advantage. Together they waylaid Mr. Hobhouse in the most innocently accidental manner (blushful and delicious experience!) and if by chance one happened to be alone when she met him, it was understood that the other should take a solitary turn, bring off a private encounter and so square the reckoning.

They kept a tally which they chanted to a lilting undertone in quiet lanes: "Met Bill one, Met Bill two, Met Bill three," and so on, the number mounting from breakfast till supper-time. "Met Bill seven," was the record for any one day. Oh, life was worth living, these hols!

In much the same way they watched over Miss Blythe, but she was more difficult, for she lived, you see, a short distance out of the village. Her grounds were biggish, and you couldn't see the house from the road. The Old Firm knew her just slightly, and longed to know her really well, for she was perfectly sweet, young, fearfully pretty—such gorgeous red hair, all bunchy—and her car a dream. As for her clothes, they gave the Firm no end of surprises, and always something fresh and exciting to talk and wonder about. They had been to tea with her once, but only about some Girls' Club business, which took the edge off the enjoyment. They would have preferred to be asked for themselves alone. It is true Miss Blythe had kissed them both when she said good-bye, and told them they must come again soon. But "soon" hadn't arrived yet.

All the same, they agreed that Miss Blythe was their chief "pash." Nobody else came within miles. They dreamed all kinds of delicious adventures in her company, and racked their brains for things they could do to benefit Miss B. and make her value their friendship, really and truly, as it should be valued. But, at the best, for all their skill

in waylaying, they saw her far too seldom. A day without a glimpse was like an empty tummy, Anne said, or, added Emily, like being outside a chock-shop and no dibs in hand.

"Same thing," said Anne.

was to be expected in that quarter for some hours. The Garths were away for the week-end, the betrothed invisible, and business altogether stagnant. They played tennis all morning, and afternoon came somehow—blank and dreary even for an unoccupied



"Get work—get work! Go teach the orphan boy to read, go teach the orphan girl to sew
'No, thanks, Tennyson's off,' said both together."

That Saturday had been rather a fraud. When the Firm met after breakfast, Anne's exclamation, "Bill sermon!" with a jerk of her head towards Mr. Hobhouse's study window, told Emily that little excitement

Saturday, when the weekly visiting barrel organ accentuated the misery and thumped the awful emptiness of the day into your desolate soul.

"Can't us make up 'scuse to call on

darling Blythie?" Anne suggested after lunch.

"No 'scuse poss," Emily sighed. "Hullo, Bill out."

The pair were killing time at Anne's gate. They looked down the road and saw the Curate leaving his house. He vanished round the corner into Sloe Lane.

Business had recovered. If you cut through Anne's garden, you could be in the upper part of Sloe Lane within two minutes; far less, if you possessed the heels and the head of the Firm.

Thus it came about that Mr. Hobhouse, seeking fresh air and exercise after hours of sermon-writing, found himself approached by two casual-looking persons linking along with heads downbent in blissful preoccupation. They did not appear to notice him until he roared (they loved his roar): "Hullo, old ladies! Whither away?"

Then their startled pinkiness was beautiful to see. They stood twinkling at him, Emily with mysterious dark eyes, Anne with her frank blue. They made a pretty pair. Emily, the taller, was nearer womanhood, but yet not woman, still very much a frank boyish companion of the next good friend; Anne, all boy still, with her short fair hair, brief skirts and close-clinging jumper, looking for all the world like a roguish Florentine page out of a fifteenth-century picture. They held each other up, swaying slightly, and, now that they had run Bill down, a trifle hard up for something to say.

"Whither away?" the Curate repeated, flourishing his stick.

"No whither," replied Anne, in solemn mockery—Anne had a nice sense of language sometimes. "Oh, B—Mr. Hobhouse, we's awfle bored—nuffin' doin'."

Mr. Hobhouse offered pastoral advice:

"Get work—get work! Go teach the orphan boy to read, go teach the orphan girl to sew—"

"No, thanks, Tennyson's off," said both together. "Not to-day, baker, if *you* please." And, nodding, they moved on.

"Thought that would settle them," Mr. Hobhouse reflected, striding on his way. He looked back a little apprehensively. The Firm was nowhere to be seen. That was ominous. He hoped for the best, but doubted, and held on his road, which led out of the village.

Mr. Hobhouse, for so firm a character, was for once uneasy in his mind even to the point of fear. The next cross-roads would be crucial in his history. It would be a feat

if they did it, but those two haunting young women were up to anything in the way of putting in a sudden appearance. Hitherto their jiggling ubiquity had amused him. To-day it held vague alarms.

Well, there was no turning back. The cross-roads came in sight. Bother those kids! . . . They had done a record in short cuts, and there they were, but not alone. They were leaning over the side of a smart little two-seater, worshipping the driver with all their heart and with all their mind, and in particular with their eyes. As the Rev. Bill drew near, he saw that the Old Firm was slightly blown. That did not surprise him.

Miss Blythe, at the wheel, gave the Curate a pleasant little nod in return for his bow.

"Lovely afternoon," he said, stopping. They shook hands and exchanged a word or two about nothing. "I must hurry on," he explained; "must see the Vicar for a few minutes at four o'clock."

Miss Blythe smiled. "Appointments must be kept," she remarked, "wherever possible. I'd have offered you a lift, but I'm in a hurry, too. Anne and Emily, would you like to jump in? I'll run you down to the village. Then I must tear back—that is—home again at once. Good afternoon, Mr. Hobhouse." As she spoke she held him with her glittering eye, which seemed to say more than her lips. But the girls missed that; they were so joyfully busy squeezing in beside Miss Blythe.

It *was* a squeeze—all the jollier for that. The drive was far too short, but Emily and Anne hardly knew themselves. They were getting on. After their delicious pack into her car, they felt that they knew Blythie quite intimately. Also she had asked them to tea next week, all for themselves alone, no Club business about it.

Meanwhile the Rev. William trudged along to the Vicarage, where he intended to make only the very shortest of calls. The Vicar thought his lieutenant's errand trumpery. He might have respected it more had he known that the call was paid to salve a conscience. Having caught his Curate, however, the Vicar thought he might as well improve the shining hour, and accordingly he plunged into several matters of parish business which he began to discuss at great length. Bill sat on thorns while the Vicar's questions and instructions drew out interminably. Mr. Hobhouse wished he had left his conscience at home. He wished it far more when he heard a car, of which

he could recognise the purr, pass the Vicarage gate. At that moment he felt rather less amiable than usual towards Emily and Anne.

"And by the way, Hobhouse," continued the Vicar (as a sort of "fifteenthy, my brethren"), "I have just heard that Miss Marjorie Maitland is ill. Nothing serious, but she can't play the harmonium in Sunday-school to-morrow. I've no doubt Miss Blythe will be good enough to take her place. Would you mind stepping along to ask her?"

At that moment Mr. Hobhouse would much rather not, but he couldn't say so. In a very disturbed state of mind he left the Vicarage and walked, with the leaden foot of a condemned man, to Miss Blythe's house.

Miss Blythe was at home—the car at the gate told him that, before the maid said "Yes" and showed him in. Miss Blythe took her time about appearing, and when she did come her manner was stard-offish.

"Well," she began, "you've come to apologise, I hope."

"Partly," said Mr. Hobhouse, in great discomfort, but Truth compelled him to add, "not altogether."

"I don't like dense people," continued Miss Blythe. "Surely the hint I gave you was broad enough? The appearance of those two oppressive infants couldn't be helped, but I got rid of them rather neatly. I think. Didn't you understand I'd return to the cross-roads in a few minutes? I knew quite well your call at the Vicarage was just *façon de parler*. Where did you disappear to? I ran about for a while looking for you everywhere. Well, you've spoiled my afternoon—it's too late now. I'm hurt. If you'd come expressly to apologise, I might have forgiven you, but making amends seems to be quite by the way. What did you come for if not for that? And we'd have had such a lovely drive. Really, Mr. Hobhouse, I can't think why you've come here at all."

Miss Blythe's pretty indignation, with its hint of tears, steadied Mr. Hobhouse's whirling brain. He attempted no clumsy excuses, but took the upper hand, like a man. Perhaps he left his clerical conscience—which had nearly cost him so dear—out of the bill when he gave his errand a name, for it certainly wasn't the Vicar's business that he spoke about. He may not even have intended, that afternoon, to say what he did say to Miss Blythe, and some men might have thought the moment inopportune, but Hobhouse, at his best, was equal to the bold game.

"Preposterous!" Miss Blythe said, when he had made his case clear. "Really, William, for a man to add *insult* to injury like this. . . ." At this point Miss Blythe let the Rev. Bill insult her again. "By the way," she added, looking up after a longish interval, "have you had tea? I suppose not. I'll have some fresh made, and you'll stay and dine?"

* * * * *

Latish in the evening it occurred to the Old Firm that the only possible way to end the week would be to do a prowling past beloved Blythe's gate. If she were in the garden, they might get a glimpse of her, perhaps a word in passing. Nothing could be lovelier. And if they missed her, something else might turn up. For several hours Bill hadn't been anywhere about. Kept at the Vicar's, likely. They could go round that way, after Blythe's; with luck they might meet Bill and walk home with him.

When, on reaching Miss Blythe's gate, Emily and Anne killed two birds with one stone, their cup was full. Blythe and Bill were double extra nice to them, which was magnanimous, for the Old Firm didn't dream that their sudden appearance had forced their friends to say "Good night" rather more conventionally than would have been the case had the twilight lane been empty of wayfarers. But Bill and Blythe, reviewing the afternoon's events, had decided that, all things considered, they owed quite a lot to the Old Firm's butting in at the cross-roads.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the Rev. William, halting in his walk home with Emily and Anne. "I've forgotten to give Miss Blythe a message from the Vicar. It's urgent. I must run back at once. Good night, old ladies. See you to-morrow."

Emily and Anne each got into a horrible scrape at home for staying out to improper hours. But it wouldn't have been in human nature not to make one more shot to see Bill again, and, perhaps, late though it was, dearest Blythe herself. But this time, for certain reasons of delicacy, at the last moment they remained afar off, and even had to take cover.

"Who would have thought it?" whispered Emily, clutching Anne's arm in rapture.

"The idea!" said Anne. "Some joke!"

"Some secret!" chuckled the Old Firm in unison.

CHAMPIONSHIP CHESS

INCIDENTS AND REMINISCENCES

By J. R. CAPABLANCA,
WORLD'S CHAMPION

EXPERIENCE in chess, as in everything, is generally associated with elderly men, but in the case of a man who began to play chess almost from the time he was born, we have even at an early age the exceptional conjunction of comparative youth with old experience.

One's proclivities in any direction are often indicated in earliest childhood, and are as often the result of some special event which has attracted the interest of the child beyond common boundaries. In my case it was one of the historical Steinitz-Tchigorin encounters, extensively discussed in Havana at the time. I was then four years old. The second event was Pillsbury's visit to Havana when I was eleven years of age. I was then a very mediocre player, but the reader can well imagine the impression on a child full of imagination produced by a man who could play simultaneously sixteen or more blindfold games of chess at the same time that he played a number of blindfold games of draughts and a hand of duplicate whist.

Though not in accord with the dictum of two or three stubborn old journalists who pose as chess critics, I have always had a very vivid imagination, which I have, after a long struggle, partly succeeded in controlling in order to use it to better purpose, according to the requirements of the occasion. The effect of Pillsbury's displays was immediate. They electrified me, and with the consent of my parents I began to visit the Havana Chess Club. By leaps and bounds I reached the top class in three months, and I was not over twelve when I defeated the champion of Cuba in a set match. The match was somewhat dramatic; the victor was to be the player who first scored four wins. I began by losing the

first two games. On account of my age, I had the sympathy of the vast majority of the chess players and the public in general, and their disappointment after such a disastrous start can be readily conceived. With practically but one exception, that of my lamented friend A. Fiol, all the amateurs and experts gave me up for lost. The consensus of opinion was that I was outclassed by the champion. I must confess that I had very similar feelings, and that I was overawed by the vast technical knowledge of my adversary. I had nothing to oppose to his experience but my clear imagination and an ability, already evident, of playing the last part of the game with considerable accuracy. My friend Fiol encouraged me in my determination to do better. As matters turned out, I was able to win four games before my opponent could add one single point to his score.

At this time I was somewhat frail and small for my age. One day in a provincial town I was taken to one of the local clubs. In a corner of the room two elderly gentlemen were playing. There was no one about as I sat and watched them play. I have been accustomed from childhood to sit quietly while watching others play. Many times I have witnessed the most appalling mistakes without saying a word until I have been asked. On that occasion, when the game was over, one of the gentlemen had to leave, and the other, not seeing any of his customary opponents around, asked me if I knew the game. My silence had made him doubtful on the subject. When I answered in the affirmative, he promptly offered me the odds of a knight, as he said, in order to see how well I could do, and at the same time he volunteered the information that he was the strongest



Photo by)

J. R. CAPABLANCA.

[Navana.

disease from which he was not suffering. Then I boldly offered to give him a knight, which he indignantly accepted to show me that I presumed too much. This time it was a real struggle, but finally the old gentleman, probably worn out, had to resign. He was so mortified that he put on his hat and hardly said goodbye. On second thoughts he turned back to inquire my name, a thing he had forgotten to do before playing. On finding out, his pride was evidently relieved, and he apologised for having given me odds, adding that he had never thought it was possible for such a mite of a boy to play as I did. This was the first as well as one of the most interesting of many similar experiences.

In the summer of 1904 I went to the United States to learn English and prepare to enter Columbia University.

player in the town. I have always made it a practice to accept whatever odds have been offered to me.

I therefore accepted the proffered odds as we sat down to play. The old gentleman was somewhat astonished at the quick result, and, after trying one more game with lesser odds, decided that I was too strong, and condescended to play me even. After he lost the first game he stated that he was not fit. After the second game he decided that he must have been altogether ill and far below his usual form, and by the time he lost the third game there was not a single

One evening in 1906 or 1907—I have forgotten the exact date—while I was visiting the Manhattan Chess Club in New York, an acquaintance of mine came in and invited me to go down town to the East side to witness a simultaneous blindfold exhibition by one of the many second- or third-rate so-called “masters” residing in New York. The single player of the occasion was an excellent blindfold performer when pitted against only six or eight players. When we arrived, the affair was in its most interesting phase. We were taken to a corner of the room, where a short, middle-aged man, with a

rather large head, sat in front of a board discussing one of the games in progress. I did not know anybody, and nobody knew me as we silently sat down to watch the proceedings. The short man was heard with evident respect by those around the table. Looking on with intense interest, I was surprised to see the others acquiesce in moves and explanations which were somewhat beyond me. My youthful conceit made me think that what I heard was absurd, and that the little man was not much of a player. On one or two instances I was on the point of interfering to contradict the much-respected personage. Luckily my old habit of watching, without saying a word, saved me from a most humiliating experience, as a few minutes later I was introduced to the little man, who was no less a person than the great Dr. E. Lasker, the then world's champion. Never in my life have I been so thankful for keeping my own counsel. The fact was that the great player looked upon the position from a different point of view to that of the common good ordinary player I was then, and a far higher one, and, with his profound knowledge and instinct, discarded as worthless many lines of play which I considered important.

A couple of years later I had the most extraordinary experience of my chess life. I was then at Columbia University, but visited frequently the Manhattan Chess Club. Dr. Lasker lived then in New York. One night, when I was in the club, he came in. I was by this time recognised as the strongest player in the club. Dr. Lasker paid me the compliment of asking me to look over with him a certain position which had puzzled him considerably, and about which he had not quite made up his mind. As we sat down some of the strong players of the club came over to watch, and incidentally to offer suggestions, but naturally with the respect due to the presence of the then world's champion. We had been there for about half an hour without having arrived at any definite conclusion, when a well-dressed young man walked in, said "Good evening," sat next to Dr. Lasker, and inquired as to the nature of the matter under consideration. Immediately after he was told he proceeded to treat Dr. Lasker's suggestions in a rather cavalier manner, and undertook to show us that we did not know what we were after. I looked at him in amazement, but, seeing his unconcerned expression and the apparent familiarity with

which he treated Dr. Lasker, I concluded he was a close friend of the champion, and consequently I said nothing. It did not take long for Dr. Lasker to show the young man how little he really did know about the matter under consideration. The young man soon got up, said "Good night," and left. I could restrain myself no longer, and therefore asked Dr. Lasker who his friend was. His answer was that he had never seen the young man before, and that he had thought all the time that the young man was a close friend of mine—a truly astonishing situation. We had both treated the young man with a great deal of consideration because we each thought that he was the other's intimate friend, when, as a matter of fact, neither one of us had ever seen him before.

At the beginning of 1911 I crossed the Atlantic for the first time, in order to participate in the great International Tournament at San Sebastian, Spain. Such qualifications were required to compete that only sixteen players in the whole world had a right to participate. Of these, fifteen, all except Lasker, answered the call. Some doubts had been raised as to my own right to participate, and some of the players were very sceptical as to the reputation I had acquired on the other side of the water. I had the satisfaction and good fortune of silencing my critics by winning, not only the first prize, but also the special prize for the most brilliant game of the tournament. It was remarked by the chess critics that I played very quickly, and that I always got up and walked about while my opponent was thinking. In the United States, where the amateurs had watched my progress step by step, my habits were so familiar that they called forth no comments of any sort. It was taken for granted that I would play far quicker than my opponent, and that I would be walking about a great part of the time during the progress of the game. But in Europe, where they saw me for the first time, the contrast did not fail to be noticed. They were used to seeing the strongest players, when pitted against one another, take all, or nearly all, the time at their disposal and seldom get up and walk. On this point—which aroused at the time considerable comment, and has since been a subject of speculation—there are some considerations which I should like to submit.

Evidently a slow player cannot afford to get up often from the table and walk about while his opponent is thinking, since his

time is limited, and he will generally need every minute of it, but a quick player may find it convenient to walk about in order to give his mind some rest. Often there is a great deal of mental work saved by it. Suppose that during the course of the game a very difficult position arises. By a process of elimination, which every master follows more or less, the conclusion is reached that there are three main lines of play which must be considered, each one of which will lead into complications requiring deep thought. Mere general knowledge will not suffice; on the contrary, it will be necessary to go through every possible variation that may clear the situation. If at that moment you remain seated while your opponent is thinking, you will perforce have to go through every part of those three different lines of play. If you are a very much quicker player than your opponent, you may be able to run rapidly through the three of them before your opponent moves, but as he can adopt only one of the three, the result is that two-thirds of the work is wasted. But this is the best case. Suppose, on the other hand, that you have had only time to examine two of the three possibilities before your opponent moves, and that when he moves he adopts the third line, the one you have not had time to analyse, then it is evident that you have wasted all your work, and that you are no better off than if you had been walking about, in so far as the saving of time is concerned, and that in any case you are much worse off in regard to the amount of wasted mental effort. Of course, as I said before, only a quick player who can come back as soon as his opponent has moved, take hold of the situation, and go through whatever analytical process may be required within the limited time at his disposal—only such a player should indulge in the practice of constantly leaving the board to walk about. Before leaving this subject, I should like to add that I have purposely exaggerated the case, so as to make clear the reasons to be considered.

Towards the end of 1911 I sent a challenge to Dr. Lasker to play for the World's Championship. The negotiations were

hardly started when they came to an end, because Dr. Lasker, on account of some fancied grievance, refused to meet me. Whatever his true reasons may have been, it was a costly blunder on his part. I was at the time merely a natural chess player with the same powers I have now, but without the knowledge which I have since acquired through experience and hard thinking. In the light of my present knowledge I believe that his chances of winning at the time would have been excellent.

Had he then played and won, the moral effect alone would have always been a powerful weapon in his hands. His postponement of the encounter, hoping, possibly, that the event might never take place, was a blunder which was bound to prove fatal. Apart from other considerations, the moral to be derived is: Always accept a challenge, and play the challenger as soon as the conditions required are complied with. The mere fact that the champion is ready to play at once will make the challenger think that his own chances are none too good. The champion always has in his favour a moral force which can only be increased by showing that he has no fear whatsoever of his opponent.

In 1913 I entered the Cuban Foreign Office. I was sent to Petrograd, where I remained until the 14th of July, 1914, scarcely two weeks before the outbreak of the Great War. In the spring of 1914 the Great International Tournament of Petrograd took place. After looking like a certain winner, I finished second—half a point behind Dr. Lasker. That was my last setback. Since then I have won every tournament in which I have participated, and won the two set matches I have played: one against Kostich, who resigned after losing five straight games, and the other against Dr. Lasker, for the World's Championship, which he resigned when the score stood four to nothing against him. How long I shall hold the championship no one can tell. My predecessor held it until he was 53 years old. If I can hold it until I am 50, I shall be satisfied. One thing is certain: I shall always be ready to defend it at a moment's notice.



SNAPDRAGON AND GHOSTS

By E. L. WHITE

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD · K. ELCOCK

"I'VE brought you a Christmas present, Leslie—a ring which has the power of granting wishes."

The girl eyed the trinket as trustfully as a wild animal regards a trap. It was a half-hoop of diamonds, and much resembled an engagement ring.

The man smiled as she drew it on her index finger.

"I wish—I wish for an old-fashioned Christmas — snow, snapdragon, and ghosts!"

She crossed to the open window.

"Look! Nothing's happened!"

Below them stretched a dun, tideless sea, pricked with lamp-posts, above was a bagging ceiling-cloth of smoke-clogged vapour, and all around were the honey-combed cells of the block of flats.

Then from the invisible street arose a boy's thin treble. He kept the tune, also his accent, which was the canned twang of cities.

"Good King Wenceslas went forth——"

Leslie winced as she slammed down the window. She was a well-grown girl, with crystal-clear eyes and a youthful blur on her cheeks. With the same furious energy she wrenched off the ring.

"Take it back, George! It's very kind of you, but it's not pukka magic. Give it to someone who has the power to make it work."

"Very well. I will take it back—for the present. But you did not try the right finger for the spell."

He spoke with meaning, while he invited her scrutiny, with no fear of the stock-taking. He kept his goods in his shop window, with the approved labels: "Virility," "Pep," "Clean Living," "Open-Air Life," all achieved by Turkish

baths, a smile which had paid him better than his education, and a stomach which was still taking its punishment.

But Leslie was not conscious of his presence. She was conscious only of the mass of humanity all around her, below and above her, of air thickened with voices, staled with breath, fouled with footsteps.

It was one of her bad days, which came when she was run down mentally and physically—days when she hungered for wide spaces and panted to climb to the chimney-pots of the world and hurl herself into the blue.

The high rental of the flats was justified solely by locality. Leslie believed that in the beginning an honest architect built an honest house, suitable to the good old Victorian days when families were twelve to a score of years and Providence looked after the future. That mischievous urchin, the architect's son, spoiled the original plan by ruling small squares all over it. When he achieved manhood, he chanced upon his childish drawing and found therein the essentials of good modern architecture.

So he partitioned each room into three, filched odd fragments therefrom, which were kitchen and bathroom, and gave each its own front door. And the rent of the house was the rent of each flat thereof.

Leslie took four wide strides which brought her up flush with the yellow wall.

"George," she said vehemently, "if anyone could look down—down, this city must seem like a black fly-paper, all buzzing with wretched little limed folks!"

He laughed as her voice broke in a croak.

"You've the grandfather of all the colds. Better not talk, old dear. You've got to be fit for Christmas."

"Christmas? There's no such word

here. It's just a date on the calendar—December the twenty-fifth."

He whistled softly, for Leslie was usually too vital and tonic to be the victim of nerves. Then he gave a sigh of relief as the door of the bedroom was opened and his sister Beryl came in, armed with a couple of thermos flasks.

She was a beautiful blonde, with a permanent wave in her hair and a fish-bone in the throat of her natural impulses. She kept her emotions in cold storage and her money in the bank, for she lived by virtue of co-operative housekeeping with Leslie, who had no head for applied arithmetic.

She raised her brows imperceptibly. Her brother replied by wireless—

"Stuck!"

"I'm through with my packing, Leslie." Her voice held the clear diction of an occasional actress in straight drama. "What about yours, Leslie?"

"Plenty of time. I'm only taking a grip."

Beryl glanced at her sharply.

"Anything wrong?"

"Nothing. Just Christmas. It makes me think back, and then I get soggy and sentimental. . . . Christmas in the country, with red firelight and decorations, and the smell of cooking, and the family coming home for the holidays. That's inside. Outside is a white world, with the light streaming from the church window, where they are practising the carols. 'Peace on earth—'"

Something more than a relaxed larynx choked Leslie's voice.

Peace on earth? With Caruso on the gramophone at No. 11, a jazz on the pianola at No. 13, and at No. 15 a ladies' tea-party, with a little quiet conversation with ladies just across the way in Mars; a child crying at No. 12, a Pom yapping for the moon at No. 14, and at No. 16 a sick man making the best of it by trying to die.

Beryl, who was sound-proof, began to laugh.

"Snow and holly and tame robins buttoning up their little red waistcoats! Be honest, woman! You lived in the West. Wasn't it a warm wind, and muddy lanes, and charcoal in the turkey to keep it from going off?"

"Mostly," admitted Leslie. "But once in a while we did have old-fashioned weather, with skating and frost flowers on your window. I keep thinking of *that*. Oh, dear heart! I do want it all back again!

. . . Give me those flasks, and I'll heat up the coffee."

She felt that she must escape, if only for a few minutes, from those others. In half an hour the three would be penned in a railway carriage, on their way to the South Coast hydro. There they would follow the Spirit of Mirth through the trail of the programme of festivities, and howl "Auld Lang Syne" with a collection of overfed, sentimental strangers.

Leslie panted anew for the mountain-top. Meantime the Child would be reborn. And there was no manger at the hydro, only a feeding-trough.

The kitchen, like the rest of the flat, had yellow walls, black painted woodwork, and hangings of Chinese blue. It was a dishonest little crook of a room, and uncongenial to Leslie, who was a real homey person.

It had no qualities. No flames roared in the heart of its stove, which displayed the mysteries of its art of creation through a transparent panel. Behind plate-glass shelves were tins of sophisticated food, each with its artistic label, no jars of flour, spice, or plums, no smell of freshly-baked apple dumplings—nothing to regale the appetite, nothing to satisfy the Christmas spirit. It was a kitchen in name only.

At first Leslie had enjoyed the novelty of sharing the flat with Beryl Webb. Clad in wondrous cretonne overalls splashed with peacocks and parrots, and lighting rather more cigarettes than she smoked, she had designed her wallpapers with that youthful zest which made earning her living only another adventure. The flats then were to her only so many stories to the stars, for she was in love with the topmost tenant.

Douglas Burns had a flat among the chimney-pots, with an armchair, a frying-pan, and a varied assortment of pipes. Unlike George Webb, he offered no surface attractions, but presented a problem in mining to discover what went to his making.

A shortish, square-built man, with a rough-hewn face and a quiet voice, yet a fairy, for all that—one of the scientific genus who unite oceans and remove mountains. In other words, an engineer.

When Leslie had inherited her legacy, she had made no difference in her life. Presently, however, she found that life had altered in its attitude to her. Small incidents, trivial yet cumulative, had culminated in Christmas Eve, when she found herself bounded on the north, south,

east, and west by George Webb, while Burns had withdrawn to the back of Godspeed.

Leslie shut the kitchen door with a sense of relief. This room contained two of her treasures—relics of the past. One was the dress-cupboard, which she had chosen from the wreck of her old home—a wondrous substantial ark of mahogany lined with cedar-wood. The other was her picture of the highwayman, masked and mounted, in caped coat and three-cornered hat, waiting for the stage coach.

He had waited for it over a hundred years, there in the triangular patch of pines on the blasted heath, with the thin nail-paring of a moon, which would never swell to the full, riding in the amethyst sky.

The coffee got outside the pan as Leslie brooded over the picture. Within the limits of its frame were frosty space and romance and the spirit of the old-time Christmas, when lawlessness was adventure, and one tied up one's gifts with a true lover's knot.

"Holloa! Still stirring the Christmas pudding in the old home town in the West?"

As Beryl salvaged the coffee, her smile was acid as citron.

"I can see you, Leslie, the stock-coloured supplement of the Christmas number. You are the girl with the curls, in the full evening-dress of serviceable tulle, who's just finished her stunt of wreathing the church pillars with holly. . . . My grief! That broken-nosed highwayman has a look of Douglas Burns. By the way, he's just blown in."

With a lightning transposition of values, the little yellow mouse-trap was charged with a rich, full-flavoured Dickens atmosphere of roast goose and nut-brown ale, mistletoe and ice, snapdragon and ghosts. Leslie remembered that her highwayman was probably a pock-marked, unfragrant rascal, and that in another hundred years the block of flats and the South Coast hydro would be growing crusted and historic.

Her eyes were bright with anticipation as she followed Beryl into the sitting-room, where the two men were talking in jerks and not looking at each other.

Burns threw her a swift glance, tapped out his pipe, and rose.

"Well, I must be off. Just dropped in to wish you a good time and a merry Christmas, and all that sort of thing."

The glow faded from Leslie's face. It

was always like this, the eager throb of welcome ending in the formal handshake of farewell.

"Are you going away for Christmas?" she asked.

"I shall probably pad the hoof. Moors."

"Moors! Fine. I'd love to do that. Just sun and wind and no one to see you but God."

"If you wish to test that theory, just try stealing a sheep. My word, you've a ripe, old-fashioned cold! Don't forget to take a flask of brandy."

"Thanks. That completes my collection of the hundred best remedies. I'm going to follow my granny and tie an old stocking round my throat."

"Well, don't talk, or your voice will go. Cheerio!"

"Time to pack, Leslie!"

They chased her out of the sitting-room as though she were an infectious germ.

She packed mechanically, her thoughts far from tissue-paper, face-foods, and boot-trees. In the same dream she put on her hat and coat and filled her flask with brandy. There was a little thrill of pleasure in following Burns's advice.

Hearing Beryl call, she hastened to fasten her grip. To her annoyance, she had packed too tightly, and the wedged sides refused to meet. Some bulky garment had to be discarded.

"Coming!"

Hurriedly dragging out a thick quilted silk dressing-gown, she rushed into the kitchen, where her summer things were stored away in the press. She stepped inside it, and as she was groping with frantic haste to find a muslin wrapper, she heard Beryl's voice the other side of the door.

"She's in the bedroom. Quick, George! Have you asked her?"

"Began to. Nothing doing—at present."

"George! She never turned you down?"

"She didn't have the chance to turn me down." The splendid George spoke with a certain irritation. "I saw she wasn't in the mood with that rotten cold."

"Well, I'd have snapped her up before she got to the hydro. There's plenty of competition for an heiress. I've had my work cut out keeping others off the grass."

Leslie shrank back into the unresponsive arms of the summer dressing-gown she had just located. In view of the extreme awkwardness of the situation, she had to remain an unwilling audience. She felt grateful that the cupboard door was closed,

so that it was outlined by only a mere crack of light.

Beryl's last words had evidently given George food for reflection. He leaned suddenly against the cupboard and took out his pipe.

"Does the strong silent gorilla blow in often?"

"Burns? Not now. He was very keen at one time, but I rubbed it in that Leslie was very awake to fortune-hunters."

"Oh!" gasped the wrapper, thrilled to its very hem.

"That's a nasty knock for me, old dear!" George's laugh was half shamed, half cynical. "Burns doesn't seem a bad sort. A bit keen on him yourself, aren't you?"

"Am I?" Beryl's voice was careless. "He's—rather a lamb. We ought to be starting. Leslie! Leslie!"

Leslie, gasping among the summer finery, was not answering to her name. The circumstances put it out of the question. Moreover, her mind was a jungle of rioting emotions through which one truth soared triumphant.

Douglas Burns had not changed towards her. Both had been pawns in Beryl's fingers, ambitious of a dowried wife for her brother, and for herself a lover caught on the rebound.

She heard Beryl's voice, now blurred as though by distance. Apparently they had left the kitchen, for the pencil of light had disappeared.

"I can't find Leslie anywhere in the flat. Do you think she has gone out to get a taxi?"

"Probably. Where's her grip?"

Leslie held her breath. She had left it under the kitchen table.

"I don't see it," replied Beryl.

"I should say she's gone on to make the train early and reserve seats. Sherlock's my middle name. We'd better thither, in any case."

Leslie waited until a distant slam told her that the flat was empty and locked for a week. She was trembling with varied emotions, but prudence told her that she must follow them as soon as possible to the station. Although she had to go through with the festivities at the hydro, she would be on guard. The holiday would give her time to think of how she should save the wounds to Burns's self-respect. Already the future seemed powdered with stardust.

She pushed the door, but, to her surprise,

it did not swing open. She tried again with fingers which suddenly grew hot and ineffective. The door had a spring lock, but she had been careful not to fasten it.

The gramophone in the next flat broke into a band record of carols. The tea-party ladies grew more festive, for no tea was drunk at that party.

Leslie's heart dropped a beat. She put her shoulder against the door and pushed with all her strength. It did not yield.

At that moment the gramophone broke into a wailing chorus, as though heavy with the burden of old sorrows and old sins—

"Oh, the mistletoe bough!

Oh, the mistle-to-e bo-ough!"

The blood left Leslie's heart and rushed to her head. She remembered now how George had pressed against the door, also the dulled voices and the darkness. She was locked in the cupboard, like the little bride of over a century ago who had hidden in the oak chest on her wedding night, in the full tide of her youth and love and life.

And now, in tones of unutterable dolour, the gramophone was telling the end of the years-long search—a mouldered veil, a withered wreath, a handful of—bones.

A careless wish dropped into the dun, stagnant pool had found a fertile breeding-spot. Leslie heard a strange voice croaking—

"You fool! You asked for it—an old-fashioned Christmas!"

She felt her breath beginning to break in little panting half-sobs, like a distressed runner, and she knew that, at all costs, she must stem the rising tide of hysteria. She must feel no pity for that little human mouse caught in a trap baited with moon-cheese.

"I must *think*—think good and hard."

But every thread she followed led her back to a locked cupboard door.

To-night was Saturday. The hydro party would not be home until the following Tuesday week, for they had booked to stay for the New Year ball, which had to be held upon the Monday. Their daily servant was due back on the day before them, in order to air and clean the flat. All letters would be forwarded by the hall-porter. Consequently the flat would be hermetically sealed for nine days. And much could happen in those nine days.

She swiftly wrenched her thoughts back to George and Beryl. When they found that she was not on the train, they would institute an instant search.

Barely had she drawn her first breath of relief, when the cloud of doubt began to dim her clear picture of rescue. She saw the scene at the station—a chaos of luggage, and passengers fighting for fragments of porters and

conclude that Leslie had already taken her seat in some other coach, if they thought of her at all, which was unlikely. George covered his responsibilities with his hat, while Beryl was a limpet who concentrated on finding a rock. Leslie had to rule out



"Her fists fell dead upon the solid barrier of the two woods.
Yet, to her joy, she heard George question—"

stray inches of cubic space on the last fast train to the south.

Beryl and George would naturally

the first possibility. No one could miss her at the station.

She bit her lip fiercely as she felt anew the

frightened flutter of her heart. She had but to wait for the arrival at the hydro. And then?

And then Leslie—who knew at least the upper strata of Beryl's mind—began to feel curiously cold. She was no spoon-fed babe, but an independent, vigorous young woman,

a bee-line to anywhere but her appointed destination.

Beryl would conclude that Leslie had yielded to impulse and cut out the hydro to follow her nose.

But, apart from



“‘What’s that? A sort of noise, like—like pecking,’ ‘Someone chopping suet in the next kitchen, of course. Oh, do hurry!’”

with a temperamental tug, a tongue between her teeth, and money in her purse.

Let that same young woman loose, turn her round three times, take off her blinkers, and it’s Lombard Street to a china orange that she will swerve off in

Beryl, there remained George. Leslie, drowning in deep waters, was clutching at straws and feathers. If George wanted her money, he could only possess it through a personal medium. Less than an hour ago he had offered her a ring.

Yet if they plucked the City apart in sections, to discover its secret hiding-places, it could not help her, for the one place which they would not search would be the flat, knowing it empty as a shelled pod.

Leslie went under. It was no use cheating herself. She was doomed to die, like a poisoned rat in a drain, of hunger, thirst, or suffocation. She was a sacrifice to appease the old-fashioned Christmas spirit, which checks the feasting and joust by the lights burning blue to herald the ghost.

Her self-control snapped suddenly. She ran amok like a rogue elephant in a jungle. Pressed as she was within a few inches of space, she rained pitifully futile blows upon the door and sides of the cupboard, as effective as pennies dropping on snowdrifts.

She tried to scream at the top of her voice, but all she could achieve was a broken wheeze, like the dying effort of a cut wind-pipe. Her hands, fighting the air, got entangled with the sheaves of hanging dresses, flimsy scented summer things, and she tore them down and stamped them under her feet like an infuriated animal, not knowing what she fought.

It was a severe, but brief struggle. Choked and exhausted, she stopped battering, and slid to her knees. Perhaps it was her own attitude which reminded her of those wondrous winged guests who, not so long ago, stood at each corner of her crib. They had faded as she grew older and had flirted with a score of Johns, an occasional Mark and Matthew, and once a unique Luke, all of whom, later on, had stood between her and a Hun bullet.

Although she had grown hazy about her bodyguard, and was generally too tired for more than a prayer done into shorthand, she still felt the protection of something strong and pure. And now her whole soul rushed from her body in appeal to those four guardian angels.

"Matthew, Mark, Luke and John,
Bless the bed that I lie on;
Four corners to my bed,
Four angels guard my head . . ."

It may be that their memories were longer than hers, for certain it was that at that moment, while the taxi was honking its way through the traffic, George turned to Beryl.

"We've got to buzz back, old child! I must have left my note-case on the mantel-piece when I took out my pipe."

Leslie could hardly credit her ears when the click of the opening door aroused her from her stupor. She heard a familiar voice—

"Strike a match, Berry. I don't know where you keep your switch."

A George to the rescue—George with the noble torso and the virile clean-cut face tanned with the great out-of-doors, George, worthy namesake of a saint who spiked dragons!

Leslie sprang to her feet and hammered with all her force, which was little enough, for her elbows were jammed tightly against the back of the cupboard and allowed no purchase for her blows. Her fists fell dead upon the solid barrier of the two woods. Yet, to her joy, she heard George question—

"What's that? A sort of noise, like—like pecking."

"Someone chopping suet in the next kitchen, of course. Oh, do hurry!"

"Coming!"

Leslie drew an agonised breath. It was her very last chance. She *must* make them hear.

"Beryl! George! Help!"

To her horror, her lips gaped soundlessly, like those of a goldfish in a bowl. Only the thread of a whisper spluttered out in her throat. In her paroxysm of screaming her voice had petered out completely.

Then she heard her own name mentioned. But this time she did not crouch among the dresses, spilling her laughter down their empty sleeves.

"Berry, suppose Leslie doesn't show up at the station? She's a rum kid. What's the plan?"

"Wash her out and carry on as arranged." Beryl's voice was ruthlessly decisive as she reverted to the special pleading of the oldest criminal in the world: "*I'm not responsible for Leslie.*"

As the door banged to in the adjoining kitchen, someone chopped suet with almost passionate energy.

Leslie only desisted when her hands were sore from bruises. By this time she supposed that George and Beryl would be far away. She did not know how long she had been beating at the door.

All around her people were laughing, in training for the great festival of joy. The gramophone was being very funny over a gorgonzola cheese. The tea-party ladies had reached the top note of hilarity in the compass of their tonic.

Leslie began to laugh, too, noiselessly.

"I asked for it. No, no! Stop!"

She began to grope in the darkness, exploring every inch of the closet for some hidden spring which she knew perfectly

well was not there. Presently her finger sank nearly to its tip into a hole bored with a red-hot poker through the two woods. Leslie remembered even now the time it had taken to penetrate the thick mahogany, and the slipping she had received over a paternal knee.

When she crouched, the hole was on a level with her eyes. Although she could see nothing, it brought her some vague comfort, as a link with the outside world of living people.

The gramophone was working overtime, in honour of Christmas Eve. The carols proved a popular record, for once again Leslie heard the sorrowful story of the Mistletoe Bough.

As she listened, she lost all sense of time and place. In a light-headed half-dream she saw pictures which ran parallel to her own plight, just as though she looked in a mirror which flashed back an unfamiliar reflection. She blended into the little bride of the romantic past, in snowy brocade and floating veil, even while she was vividly conscious of herself—Leslie Mason—wearing the smartest of travelling suits under her fur coat.

She chuckled involuntarily as the radiant girl shook back her powdered curls and leaped lightly inside the old oaken chest. An unuttered scream stabbed her throat like a sword as the heavy lid crashed down. She stretched out her arms in a panic of fear. And it was only Leslie Mason, walled up among the summer gowns of the twentieth century, many of them bearing the tag of Rue de la Paix.

The thrill of terror awoke her to wide-eyed despair. She began to wonder how long it would be before Beryl recognised the truth that her disappearance was no impulsive freak. Sooner or later they must grapple with the fact that, within a few ticks of the clock, nine-and-a-half stone of beautiful girlhood, plus some very expensive clothes and a considerable sum of money, had been snuffed out like a blown candle.

There would be paragraphs in the newspapers—Beryl being interviewed, in her best frock, and with a stationary drop on her lashes. Inquiry agents would circulate those descriptions which fit every blonde woman who wears the orthodox clothes. No one would look in the cupboard. It held only Leslie's gowns—last summer's drift of stranded chiffon and lace.

But one day inevitably someone would make the gruesome discovery.

"Oh, the mistletoe bough!"

Even while Leslie wondered how long it took to die of starvation, she knew that she would not go out that way. Her breath was growing shallow, and every expansion of her lungs was an effort. She could feel large drops of sweat starting out on her forehead, while her heart leaped like a wounded bird.

She could not tell how long she had been using up the atmosphere, but it was plain that it was nearly exhausted. It seemed semi-solid, weighing down upon her like a sodden clout.

As she struggled to free herself from her fur coat, her hand pressed something in her pocket. It was the flask of brandy.

"Not much good now. But—it was sweet—of him—to think of me."

She caressed the flask foolishly, childishly. Douglas Burns had passed from her mind in the stress of her anguish. She wondered where he was—whether he had started on his journey; she wondered, too, whether she would still be somewhere in the universe, a vagrant whisper in the wind, free to fan his brow and tell him her love.

Her thoughts, which were growing misty again, suddenly cleared. A spot of light was glowing through the hole in the closet. Someone had entered the room unnoticed.

Automatically she thought of burglars, and, forgetful of her plight, her first feeling was fright. A great throb of surprise and joy shook her when she saw that the intruder was Burns. She remembered that he had once told her that he had a key which fitted their lock.

He was ready dressed for his journey in tweeds and nailed boots. But she did not question what brought him to the flat. A sense of peace and security had fallen like balm upon her tortured spirit. She *knew* that everything would be well.

Her angels had not cheated her. Since George had failed them, they had sent a worthier champion, who would hear her dumb voice and see through locked doors.

Burns marched directly to the mantel-shelf which held the sole photograph of Leslie—a snap with the sun full upon her nose, making a white blob of it, yet joyous with her own attractive grin and breeze-ruffled hair.

He looked both sheepish and sentimental as he put it inside his breast-pocket. "Going to borrow you for the week-end, little girl. Walk will do you good."

A wave of faintness swept over Leslie. She strove desperately to unscrew the top of her flask, but before she could raise it to

her lips, her head fell forward on her breast, and the flask slipped noiselessly down on to the litter of gowns.

But, even as her eyes closed, she knew that it was all right. Burns was there. And the Providence which ordains a safety-door when the proper channel is blocked, and permits eyes to speak and fingers to see,

flashed the message through the last receptive faculty. His hand upon the door-knob, Burns stiffened, threw up his head, and sniffed the air.

"Brandy?"

Casting around to locate the odour, he walked to the cupboard and unlocked the door.



WINTER SUNDOWN.

A FLAME behind thin woods
 The rags of sunset fly,
 And wold-top solitudes
 Laughterless lie.
 Beautiful are darkling hedge and hamlet
 Under the Riding sky.

Now Hodge has sought his fire;
 No bird is left a-wing.
 Soft sleep has found the shire
 Whose praise I sing—
 More beautiful to me in bare midwinter
 Than other shires in Spring.

ERIC CHILMAN.

WEATHER INSURANCE

By WILLIAM CAINE

ILLUSTRATED BY HUTTON MITCHELL

THE fifteenth of August was just a little colder and wetter and windier than had been the twelfth, the thirteenth, and the fourteenth. It brought Mr. Byles to Sea View in time for afternoon tea.

He visited his bedroom, changed his collar, brushed his three or four hairs, washed his fat little hands, and descended to the lounge, where tea was drawing to its conclusion.

In the lounge he discovered Major and Mrs. Arthurs, Mrs. and Miss Silbury, Madame Bigarreau and Monsieur Bigarreau, Mr., Mrs., and Master Tommy Spenlow, Mrs. Burton and her little Delia, Mr. Ernshaw, Mr. Prout, and the three Misses Anthony. Most of these people had been in the lounge for about forty-four of the last eighty-eight hours.

Through a complete silence Mr. Byles advanced to the tea-table and obtained a cup of tea and a scone from Eliza. Through a continuation of this silence he moved to a commanding position on the hearthrug, with his back to a spread Japanese umbrella, and, after surveying the company for a moment or two, spoke.

"They tell me," he said cheerfully and generally, "that you've been having weather like this for a day or two. The glass is still falling, I see."

Major Arthurs snorted; his wife looked apprehensive; Mrs. Silbury sighed; Miss Silbury shrugged her thin shoulders under her pink Shetland shawl. Madame Bigarreau, who had not too clearly understood, smiled amiably and went on with her crochet work; Monsieur Bigarreau, who was asleep, got on with his sleeping; Mr. Spenlow glared poisonously at Mr. Byles; Mrs. Spenlow sipped her tea; Master Tommy Spenlow giggled; so did little Delia Burton; her mother reproved her; Miss Ruby Anthony rolled up her eyes to heaven and then rolled them sideways so that they could catch those of Mr. Ernshaw,

who drew down the corners of his mouth waggishly and rolled his eyes to meet the rolling eyes of Mr. Prout; Miss Pearl Anthony intercepted this glance and passed it on to Emerald. These five young people were still not entirely crushed by their recent experiences.

"I suppose," said Mr. Byles, undismayed, "that none of you poor people are insured against bad weather. *I am*. I don't care how much it rains while I'm here."

"You don't, eh?" said Major Arthurs violently. "Well, let me tell you, sir——"

"James!" said Mrs. Arthurs entreatingly, and Major Arthurs became silent. When his wife used that particular voice, he always became silent. If he didn't, if he persisted, it generally led to her getting up and hastening away with her handkerchief to her eyes. He didn't want *another* scene this afternoon.

"I perceive, sir," said Mr. Byles, addressing the Major, "that *you*, at any rate, have not taken out one of these policies. You should, sir. You should. A capital invention, believe *me*. Costs five shillings for a fortnight, and for every day on which it rains during more than three hours between eight a.m. and eight p.m. one receives a pound, sir—a pound, sir. The idea is that in fine weather one suns oneself on the beach, strolls on the pier, listens to the band, bathes and so on, all of which one can do for a few pence; whereas if the weather is wet, one has to fall back for one's entertainment on the theatre, the cinema, the dancing-hall, the concert-room, and so forth—all of which necessitate a certain outlay. There is also the disappointment to consider—the, as it were, moral damage which the visitor to the seaside experiences when the weather is bad. Nor must we forget the physical aspect. A wet holiday, sir, does a man's health less good than a fine one. He has to be indoors all the time. He loses the beneficial effects of sunshine, the sea breezes, the ozone, no less than the tonic to his spirits which is

provided by participation in the life of a beach that is crowded with contented adults and happy, playing children. In short——”

Major Arthurs rose suddenly, slammed his tea-cup down by Eliza's elbow, and bolted up the stairs. Mrs. Arthurs, with an only half-suppressed wail, followed him.

Mr. Byles peered after them through his gold-rimmed spectacles. “Dear me,” he said, “I hope the gentleman is not ill!”

This observation was received in a silence

holidays. I understand that the scheme is by no means a new one, but it is only lately that I have heard of it. Last summer my fortnight at Bexhill was ruined by rain; not less than six days of it we had. I was telling a friend of this a month or so ago, and expressing the hope that this year I should be luckier, and he told me about this plan. I jumped at the idea. I consider it a marvellous one. Marvellous! It makes me quite indifferent to the weather we may have. Absolutely. Do you realise that if this rain only keeps on till eight minutes past seven to-night—I got in here at seven minutes past four, you know—I shall have won my policy money back and be fifteen shillings to the good?”

Mrs. Burton rose slowly, took her little Delia by the hand, and left the lounge.

Madame Bigarreau, who had given her close attention to what Mr. Byles had been saying, pointed her toe, put it out and kicked Monsieur Bigarreau on the ankle. Monsieur Bigarreau opened his eyes and stared



“Going down steadily. Tra-la!”

that could be felt by everyone, apparently, but Mr. Byles.

He emptied his tea-cup and went to the table for another. “Well,” he said, “as I was remarking, in my opinion everyone ought to insure against bad weather on their

owlishly at his wife. She jerked her chin sideways and got up. Monsieur Bigarreau got up. Preceded by Madame Bigarreau, he ascended the stairs.

“What do you say, girls?” said Mr. Ernshaw to the Misses Anthony. “Shall we

go and trip the fantastical to the funnygraph in the lybiourary? Prout, you'll come? Spenlow and Madame? Thomas, we can count on you for our fourth gent, I think. No? Yes?"

"I'm not insured against ballroom risks,"

Mr. Byles was left in the company of Mrs. and Miss Silbury. He addressed these ladies.

"A great resource, dancing," he said, "and a great invention, the phonograph. I wish the state of my heart permitted me to indulge. Our young friends, now, will be



Pom-pom! Steadily, steadily going dow-hown!"

said Mr. Spenlow, who was already on his feet, "but I'll chance it."

"Tee-hee!" said Miss Emerald Anthony explosively.

"Shut up, Emerald!" said her eldest sister, as she hustled the offender away.

as happy for the rest of the afternoon as it is possible for them to be while this pouring rain denies them access to the beach. Nor will one of them have to sacrifice herself for the others by thumping a piano. With a few discs of metal and a clockwork

apparatus, they are quite independent of human fingers. In our young days it was not so, ladies, eh?"

Mrs. Silbury looked at him, put down her tea-cup, and sighed.

Miss Silbury—who was, after all, only thirty-eight—said acidly: "My mother is, fortunately, stone deaf." She picked up from the table a novel and opened it where a paper slip had been inserted. This book she gave to her mother, who instantly and gluttonously began to read. Then Miss Silbury took up another novel, found her place, turned her shoulder to Mr. Byles, and absorbed herself in her tale. Who will deny the importance of fiction? Not I!

II.

It cannot be said that Mr. Byles had been a success. That was, of course, the fault of the weather.

Had the pleasure city of Sandybourne been basking, for only a couple of days previously, in the heat and sunlight which the visitors who thronged it imagined themselves entitled to enjoy, the sixteen wretches who herded together under the roof of Sea View would have given the latest addition to their society a very different reception. This bald, plump, and slightly pompous elderly gentleman would have seemed to them to be quite a pleasant, quite a harmless, quite a tolerable old thing. They might have met his advances without enthusiasm, but they would have assuredly accepted them. One or other of the company—perhaps two—would have said something to show him that he might hope, by to-morrow morning at breakfast, or certainly by lunch-time, to be included. Had he told them about his weather insurance, it is probable that somebody would have exhibited a certain amount of interest in it, might even have drawn him out on the subject, applauding his wisdom and expressing a resolution to think about doing the same next year. British boarders are not wholly lacking in civility. In fine weather they can be actually genial with one another.

The weather, however, had for three days been hideous.

Consequently these poor devils, who already found it nearly impossible to address one another in anything but a snarl, were in no mood to turn on the tap of their amiability for the benefit of a total stranger. Not that they would have fallen upon him, unprovoked, with insults and curses.

They were not so brutalised by what they had gone through as all that. Had Mr. Byles kept silence and drunk his tea, they would have been quite satisfied to leave him out of such dispirited conversation as might have got itself made. But when he began to boast of his confounded weather insurance, to pity them for not having shown as much foresight as he had, and at last positively to gloat upon the weather and the gain which it was going to bring him, he assumed at once in their eyes the aspect of an old and exceedingly malicious devil, and they simply could not bear to remain in his neighbourhood. And so, first by Major Arthurs, that gouty, apoplectic, and impetuous warrior, then by his wife, who feared a seizure for her lord, then by Mrs. Burton, who had had her little Delia indoors on her hands for very much longer than was good for either of them, and then by the others, Mr. Byles was suddenly abandoned. Only because Mrs. Silbury would have refused to the death to be got out of her chair and conducted to her bedroom (which she hated), did Miss Silbury (that devoted daughter and nurse) take refuge from Mr. Byles in her novel rather than in flight.

No, it cannot be said that Mr. Byles had made a good impression upon his fellow-boarders.

Nor did he diminish his unpopularity in the days that followed, which were all remorselessly wet, by continuing to insist with his associates upon the cleverness of those who insure against bad weather.

I need hardly say that he received no encouragement to maintain this theme. He did not require it. Mr. Byles was one of those discursive old gentlemen who, for the purpose of monologising, are independent, or perhaps I should say unaware, of the atmosphere which surrounds them.

Mr. Byles, it is true, sometimes thought that his fellow-boarders were a rather uncommunicative lot; he regretted that they should be so glum and silent and unsmiling. But he put it all down, first to the weather, which kept them so much indoors, poor things, and then to the fact that none of them were insured. All the more reason, he told himself, why he should do his best to keep things going at table. He never saw them except at meals, for at other times Major and Mrs. Arthurs kept strictly to their bedroom; so did Madame and Monsieur Bigarreau; Mrs. and Miss Silbury (who alone used the lounge) seemed to have an appetite for fiction that was

unappeasable; while the Spenlow couple, Mrs. Burton, the five unmarried young people and the two children, appeared to have gone quite crazy over dancing. At any rate, they were all always in the library, and whenever Mr. Byles (hearing no music) put his nose in there, the gramophone was immediately set going and he found himself alone by the door, with nothing to do but look on at revolving couples; and this made him giddy.

But at table they were obliged to listen to him, and Mr. Byles, having addressed hardly a word to a living soul since the last meal, saw to it that this obligation should be fulfilled to the utmost. I should say that he did his very utmost to keep things going and cheer up the drooping spirits of the party by discoursing on the subjects which obsessed him—his own cleverness, to wit, in insuring against bad weather, the lack of foresight which they had shown in not insuring against it, and the amount of money he was making by its continuance.

In all the fifty-nine years of his life Mr. Byles had never had a gamble, for he was by nature the most cautious of men; and since he had a sufficient income, drawn entirely from Government securities, and lived, when he was in London, in lodgings among furniture that was not his own, had no relatives concerning whose future he felt the smallest anxiety, enjoyed splendid health and took no interest in cards or horses, he had never either dabbled in stocks, or insured against fire, death or even illness—had never, in short, risked a penny on the issue of any event whatever.

And now the five shillings which he had laid out on his weather policy was bringing him in a pound a day.

The knowledge went to his head and made him foolish. He could talk of nothing else, and since he had to talk, he talked about that.

When he was left alone he spent nearly all his time at the window, feasting his eyes on the eternal rain, or, if there came a temporary brightening in the cloud-pall which rushed for ever from south-west to north-east, glancing apprehensively upwards. Perhaps he might affect to read an out-of-date periodical or an hotel guide, but soon he would be looking through the window again.

Then he would get up and go out into the hall and tap the barometer, and, did a boarder pass at the moment, observe in a loud and cheerful voice: "Going down

steadily. Going down steadily. Tra-la! Pom-pom! Steadily, steadily going down!"

Nobody killed him. Not one of them.

Day after day poured by, and still Mr. Byles was alive. Still he came down to breakfast, chuckling and rubbing his hands together, to tell them that it looked as if he was going to make another twenty shillings before lunch. Still he sat by the window of the lounge, humming to himself and supervising the weather; still he ran to the barometer and hopefully tapped it, and called out the news of its most recent descent to anyone who was near—Eliza, for instance, or John, the "boots," or Emerald Anthony, mounting to her room for a peppermint.

And nobody killed him. Nobody even struck him.

III.

It is quite certain that nothing would have happened to Mr. Byles had the inmates of Sea View all been British; for the British are a nation of cowards and slaves, who fear the consequences of their actions and never dream of sticking up for themselves against those who injure them. They live in terror of an action-at-law; they tremble at the very thought of a police magistrate; and they would rather suffer every extremity than involve themselves in a scandal.

But the inmates of Sea View were not all British. Madame Bigarreau, that fine woman, was a native of Marseilles. Her husband—but it doesn't matter of what town Monsieur Bigarreau was a native.

In the veins of Madame Bigarreau ran the blood of liberators. At least two of her great-great-great-grandfathers had marched on Paris to make history in the August of 1792. At least one of her great-great-great-grandmothers had been a *tricoteuse*.

A huge and singularly placid woman was Madame Bigarreau, bounteous of bust, with large brown eyes set very far asunder, and smooth, shining black hair, parted in the middle and coiled behind in a decent bun. Her general aspect was that of a good cow. An intelligent observer of the couple would not, however, have been blind to a certain abjectness in the bearing towards his lady of Monsieur Bigarreau, and from it that intelligent observer might have deduced the existence, beneath her tranquil exterior, of something formidable. Monsieur Bigarreau was a miserable little man with a furtive eye. The impression he created (upon an intelligent observer) was that of one who waited

for a volcano to hoist him skywards or for the lightning to smite him into nothingness. His shoulders had a fixed hunch. He was given to dropping off to sleep suddenly, as those drop off whose vital energy is at a low ebb. Awake, he watched Madame Bigarreau perpetually, alert to take his orders from her eyebrow.

This uncomfortable pair stood rather apart from the activities of Sea View. Monsieur spoke no English whatever, but he seemed to be almost as dumb in French. Madame could converse in English with tolerable fluency and correctness, but she

was willing to be civil to her, if she wanted them to be; but so long as she didn't, why should they? A dull, fat woman—that was how they regarded her. A pill, every time. To draw such a person out was a good deal of a task. Let someone else undertake it, thank you!

You are now a little prepared to sustain the shock which I am about to give you. That is as it should be. It is bad art and worse business to involve your readers in a catastrophe of which you have invited them to be the spectators. The tale-teller who springs surprises on people makes more



"She whipped off the lid and poured the half-cold contents down Mr. Byles's neck.

seldom gave herself so much trouble. A few amiabilities at meal-times, an occasional gracious observation in the lounge—this was about all she ever did to fulfil her social obligations. Nobody worried her to do more. A British boarding-house is, perhaps, the easiest place in the world in which to practise self-effacement. Not that Madame Bigarreau was treated to the cold shoulder. Oh, no! Her fellow-boarders were perfectly

enemies than friends. The *dénouement* that arrives wholly unsuspected is a *dénouement manqué*. Not only is its effect diminished, but it annoys. How shall your readers get the full benefit of a stupendous event if they themselves are stupefied? Recognising that they have been robbed of a large part of the money they have given you, they revolt and cut you off from their library lists.

But there is no fear of that happening here. You are ready for anything. Aren't you? You are? Good! Then here goes.

The place at table of this respectable Madame Bigarreau was between her husband and Mr. Byles. Monsieur Bigarreau sat on the right of Mrs. Hatch, the proprietress of Sea View, who presided at all meals. That is to say, Monsieur Bigarreau sat, at breakfast, next to the tea- and

be in a hurry to get done. Madame Bigarreau sat in her place, tranquil as oil or as the marmalade she was eating on her toast. Mr. Byles slipped in between her and Mrs. Burton, and observed with his customary chuckle: "More rain. Lots more. And the glass lower than ever. It looks as if I shall make my fifth pound to-day, eh, Madame Bigarreau?"

"Ah!" said Madame Bigarreau between



"Mrs. Hatch screamed; Major Arthurs uttered a horrible sound between a laugh and a howl . . .
Mrs. Arthurs said, 'Oh, dear! Oh, dear!'"

coffee-pots. It is important that you should get this order quite clearly in your mind. Mrs. Hatch with her tea- and coffee-pots, Monsieur Bigarreau, Madame Bigarreau, Mr. Byles—that is how it went.

On the fourth morning of his sojourn Mr. Byles was rather late for breakfast, but no one had yet finished eating. As it was raining a little harder than usual, there was no particular reason why anybody should

her splendid false teeth. "*Mais c'est trop fort, par exemple!*"

She stood up quickly, plucked a pound pat of soft Danish butter from its dish, raised it high into the air, and brought it down with all her strength upon the bald sinciput of Mr. Byles. It softened the impact of her palm, but at the same time it spread into the shape, roughly, of a cap drawn close about the ears of Mr. Byles.

"*Ah! Viellard infect!*" this wonderful woman trumpeted. "Weel you not, zen, be silent? *Ah! Espèce d'anthropophage*, weel you not ev done wiz your talkinks so of rain and paounds? Catulle," she went on briskly to her husband, "*la cafetière et dépêche toi.*"

The docile creature placed the coffee-pot between her eager hands. She whipped off the lid and poured the half-cold contents down Mr. Byles's neck, while with her disengaged hand she caught up a large bowl of sifted sugar. This she held immediately above Mr. Byles and inverted it.

"*La!*" she said contentedly, as she resumed her seat and went on with her breakfast.

The French are without their peers for discovering terse and unambiguous methods of self-expression.

Mrs. Hatch screamed; Major Arthurs uttered a horrible sound between a laugh and a howl, and smote the table with both his clenched fists; Mrs. Arthurs said, "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"; Monsieur Bigarreau glared wildly about him; Mrs. Silbury (who had no clue to these mysteries) burst into senile tears; Miss Silbury soothed Mrs. Silbury; Mr. Spenlow waved his arms and shouted "*Vive la France!*"; Mrs. Spenlow attended to Master Tommy Spenlow, who had choked on a crumb and had begun to

go black in the face; Mrs. Burton caught her little Delia to her bosom and endeavoured to hush her sudden yells of terror; Mr. Ernsshaw sat perfectly still, with his mouth and eyes wide open, goggling at Mr. Byles; Mr. Prout said, "That's torn it!"; Miss Anthony shrieked "Oh, lor!"; Miss Pearl Anthony gave way to hysterical laughter; and Miss Emerald Anthony began to shake like jelly from sheer excitement.

Mr. Byles sprang up and, without uttering a word, rushed from the room. At the same moment a sickly ray of sunlight stole in at the window and rested lovingly (but a trifle theatrically) upon Madame Bigarreau.

Half an hour later Mr. Byles and his luggage were carted away from Sea View. By this time there was not a cloud in the sky.

Since Mr. Byles allowed this matter to rest precisely there, we may assume that he regarded Madame Bigarreau as a person with whom it was safer to have no further dealings, even through their respective solicitors. She had stamped him right under—right bang under.

"*La!*" she had said, and *paf!* Mr. Byles was not.

But nobody cared at Sea View, because the fine weather had arrived and they were all out on the beach. Even Monsieur Bigarreau was smiling occasionally.



THE MAGIC TRUTH.

HOW shall I know Thee
If I do not know Thee within my breast?
What visible thing can show Thee?
What tangible thing attest?

And if I search my bosom,
To find it empty room upon empty room,
Into what flower shall blossom
The hope that outfaces doom?

WALLACE B. NICHOLS.



THE "BEARING" OF SANTA CLAUS.

TOMMY (triumphantly): B-e-a-v-e-r!!!

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

A POSTAL REFORM.

By E. S. J. Darmady.

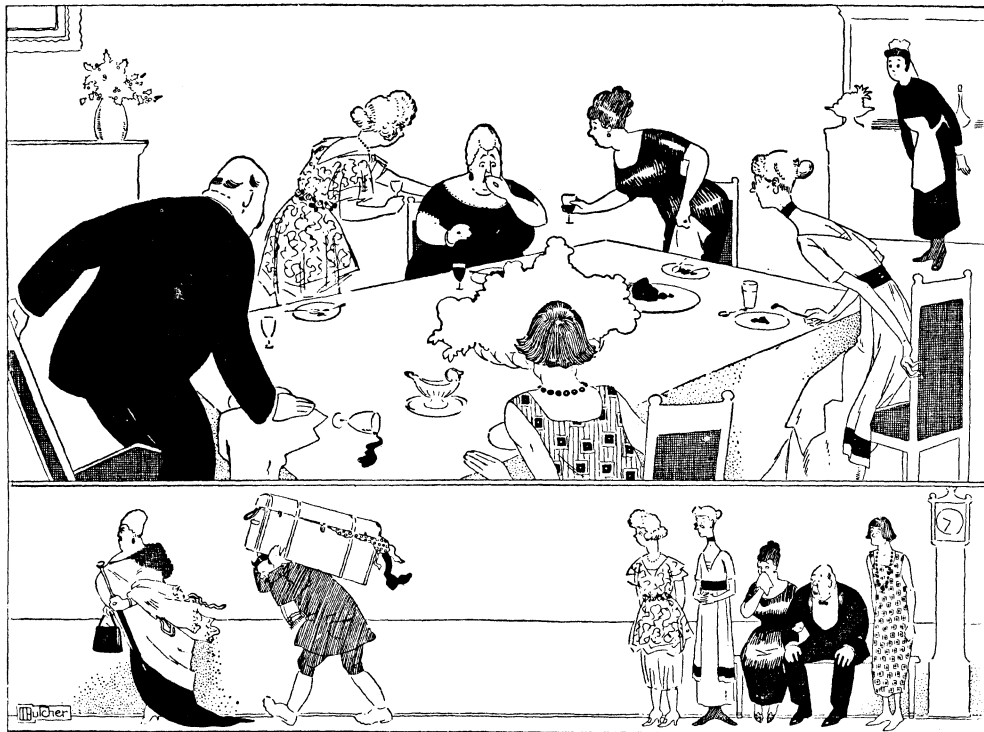
It is the close of Boxing Day, and I am ill at ease. Have I consumed too much plum pudding or port during the holidays? No. Am I unable to meet my bill? Again no. By going late to the office and returning early, to obtain reduced midday fares, and by kindred economies, I am still solvent.

What, then, has cast a gloom upon me? This. On Christmas Day I received a card from Aunt Sarah, another from the Dawkinses, and a Stilton cheese from Mr. Bertram Jarvis. Why should this be a source of tribulation? Because, while sending cards and presents to relations and friends myself, I unaccountably forgot these three. For three days, Sunday, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day, it has been impossible to get cards or presents to send in revenge—I mean in return.

What am I to do? Only what I did last Christmas, and for numberless Christmases before, and what you, gentle reader, always do. To-morrow, ere morning gilds the sky, or as soon after as feasible, I must sally forth and dispatch a card wishing "A Joyous Yuletide" to Aunt Sarah, who enjoys nothing so much at

this season as a good cry, and a second asking "Should Auld Acquaintance Be Forgot?" to Mr. and Mrs. Dawkins, in whose happy vicarage I have spent so many dreary hours. Before noon a *pâté de foie gras* must be winging its way to that kindly bore Jarvis. In every case the envelope or wrapper will bear the postmark 27th December. I try to persuade myself the recipients are too innocent or honourable to look at the date. Futile pretence! It is the first thing that each one will inspect. Aunt Sarah, in particular, has refined to an inconceivable degree the art of taking offence.

But stay. Could I brabe the Post Office to affix an earlier date? Impossible. Postal officials are impeccable. A second inspiration. The Post Office is a money-earning department. I will propound a scheme to the Postmaster-General. It is too late this year. But for all future years it will save myself and others from this recurring vexation, and open up for the State a new source of revenue. For a surcharge of, say, sixpence, letters and parcels will be ante-postmarked for a date prior to Christmas. At the same time ingenious excuses will be invented to account for the delay—something after this style: Suppose the



address is really 295, Gladstone *Crescent*; when the letter ultimately arrives, it will be found inscribed, "Delivered in error at 295, Gladstone *Terrace*." Or should the recipient live at 14, the envelope will bear the inscription; "Not known at 41; try 14." Letters for Newcastle-on-Tyne will first go by some oversight to Newcastle-under-Lyme; London letters, through an extraordinary blunder, to London, Ontario. These simple *devi es* occur to me at the moment. Given longer, I could think out some far better.

It is of the utmost importance for success that these pretences should be plausible. I doubt whether post office officials, stout fellows though they are for turning out such nervous prose as "Your complaint has been noted and will receive attention," would be equal to the task. The job should be entrusted to some exceptionally brilliant man with literary tendencies. Who better than myself? The fees would suffice to remunerate me, and leave a surplus for the State. For a larger surcharge, I would make personal calls and apologise on behalf of the Postal Authorities for the delay of letters—I should say postal packets. In return for this service a lesser fee than one guinea could not well be charged. It is not high, when you think how galling it is for a man of sensitive honour to apologise for a fault of which he is blameless, nor when you reflect that this timely courtesy may prevent a legacy from being diverted to some object of public utility.

Unless the Postmaster-General wishes to incur the reproach of lack of enterprise, he will certainly adopt my scheme and engage me to inaugurate it. One drawback only I see—for myself, I mean. I should have to work all through the holidays. But again, consoling thought in compensation, all the rest of the year would be holidays, unless—yes, I believe it could be done, with still more profit to myself and the State—unless the scheme could be extended for use in connection with forgotten birthdays.

Scene—The gallery of the Old Vic. during a performance of King Henry IV., Part I.

FIRST GALLERYITE: When that cove said, "I saw young 'Arry with his beaver on," what did 'e mean?

SECOND DITTO: He'd seen the Prince o' Wales one morning before 'e'd shaved 'isself.

A CHRISTMAS TRIOLET.

Suppose there was no mistletoe?

A woeful supposition this is !

The festive season *would* be slow.

Suppose there was no mistletoe:

But as there is, as well we know,

We're simply wasting time—and kisses!

Suppose there was no mistletoe?

A woeful supposition this is!

Leslie M. Oyler.



THE PENALTY OF PROGRESS.

THE modern improvements in mechanical toys add to the work of Santa Claus.

HARD LINES.

When I sing a little song
Of the flaming month of June,
Something's certain to go wrong
With the weather very soon;
And the nightingale, instead
Of exploiting his top note,
Needs, it seems, a strip of red
Flannel round his husky throat.

Or when, in advance, I write
Of December's frost and chill,
And the drift of bridal white
Which lies over vale and hill,

BOOKS ON THE DOOR.

It would seem almost impossible to devise any useful purpose for a door except the one for which it was originally intended, but it has been done. A suggestion was made by a Home-Hinter some time ago that bookshelves might be fixed on doors.

Now, take warning from a man who tried the experiment. He fitted up the inside of his dining-room door to accommodate his entire library, which consisted chiefly of ponderous encyclopædias and bound volumes of early Victorian magazines. One evening as he stood



AMUSING FOR BABY!

MOTHER (to Bobbie, who has been given some money to buy a present for Baby): But, Bobbie dear, Baby isn't old enough to play with trains.

BOBBIE: I know, Mummie, but I'll make Baby *promise* not to touch it.

Then thermometers will climb,
For some reason of their own,
And that special Christmas-time
Be the mildest ever known.

Ada Leonora Harris.



SHE: What has become of Mr. Spurling?
He used to be quite a society lion.

HE: He doesn't go out any more. He married a society lion-tamer.

before it, admiring the effect, the door was pushed violently from the other side, and he was felled to the floor and buried beneath the avalanche of heavy literature which rained from the shelves.

It was his wife trying to get in to tell him that baby had got his first tooth. After removing five volumes of the encyclopædias and a long set of "All the Year Round," which had rested on his head, it was found that the unfortunate father had lost several teeth. Oh, the irony of it!

NEAR an old farmhouse was a swampy piece of ground which was a breeding-place for mosquitoes. Some enterprising neighbours, who had learned of the crude oil treatment, went to the farmer and tried to persuade him to exterminate the pests.

"Exterminate 'em?" cried he. "Not much.

Not much. Why, the missis an' I just paid three pounds fifteen for screening the side verandah that she's been pesterin' me about for years! How are we goin' to get any good out of it if we kill off the plaguey critters?"

AMONG the very latest fashions are dresses embroidered with melon seeds. To any lady who is hesitating to adopt this mode from considerations of expense, we would say that vegetable marrow seeds do quite nicely and can hardly be distinguished from the real article.

A CERTAIN profiteer was examining the collection of the local Natural History Museum in the company of a curator.

"Yes," said the curator, "this collection of stuffed birds is worth thousands of pounds."

"Is that so?" said the great man. "Why, what are they stuffed with?"

A BARGEE has written a book of sonnets, but it is said that he still uses blank verse when addressing his brother-bargees.

"Would you like to try our invalid port?" inquired the wine merchant.

"I think," said the customer, "I will wait till it is convalescent."

THE man who named his motor-car "Crimson Rambler" wishes he hadn't now. The last time he took it out it tried to climb up a wall.



GRANDDAUGHTER (reading aloud from newspaper): "After the ceremony, His Royal



AN ELECTION PROMISE.

HER ELECTION AGENT: Now that you have been elected, Miss—or—Isobel, may I remind you of your promise to marry me if you won the election?

THE NEW MEMBER: Don't be absurd, Mr. Jenkins; that was only one of my election promises.

Highness mixed freely with the people, dispensing with his bodyguard."

GRANDMOTHER: Well, well, I do hope the dear lad didn't catch cold.

MUSICAL FURNITURE.

A SINGING sideboard for making music during meals has been exhibited in London. It is rather alarming to think that this may be the forerunner of a whole series of vocal furniture. We may anticipate chairs which play tunes when sat upon, and beds capable of crooning a lullaby. Tables which burst into song, and reciting bookcases are also within the bounds of possibility. A really useful invention, which would save the cost of a dog licence, would be a hatstand guaranteed to bark furiously on the approach of a burglar.

A RUBBER BOTTLE.

Though I may look a mutt, so to speak—
In other words, homely and plain—
When winter is icy and bleak
The king of the comforts I reign.

The warming-pan's place I usurp,
With its contents of calcined coal,
The chilblained may chirrup and chirp,
For blessing I bring to each sole.

I am warm, sympathetic, and kind,
Also plump and as soft as can be,
And bonds of benevolence bind
My satisfied owner and me.



CAUTION.

MISTRESS : Why didn't you call the Master before doing the sitting-room this morning?
MAID (shyly) : I was afraid he might catch me while I was dusting the mistletoe!

THE wife of a certain very parsimonious man has always experienced great difficulty in inducing him to part with any change.

One day she followed him to the door and quietly asked :

"Henry, can't you let me have a couple of pounds? I want to——"

"There you go again!" exclaimed Henry. "It's always money, money, money! When I am dead, you will probably have to beg for it."

"Well," said the wife, "I shall be a whole lot better off than some poor women who have never had any practice."

But my coat must be treated with care,
My washer, anon, be renewed,
Or those who neglect may beware
That my ardour is apt to exude.

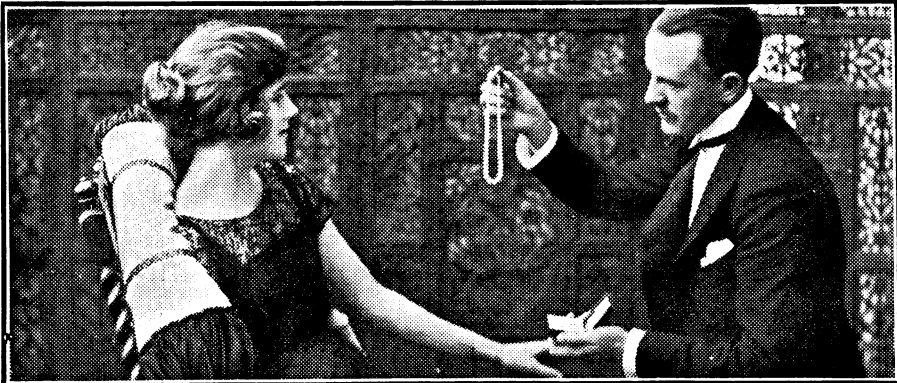
For careless ill-use saps my strength,
Till the victim awakes with a yelp—
Time brings its revenges at length:
My stopper is leaking—oh, help!

Jessie Pope.



JONES : I see you have taken the mascot off the front of your car.

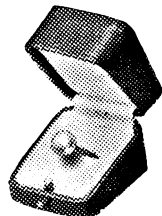
BROWN : Yes, I'm insured now.



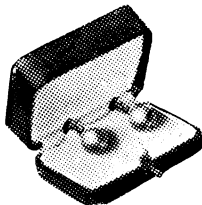
Give Her a Necklet of Ciro Pearls



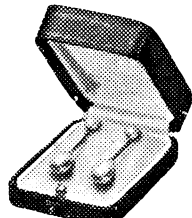
Single Ciro pearl cross-over Ring in gold or platinum. £1 1s.



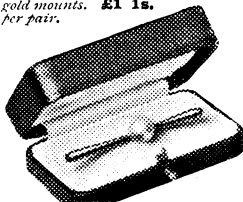
Single Ciro Pearl Ring on gold or platinum mount. £1 1s.



Single Ciro Pearl Earrings on solid gold mounts. £1 1s. per pair.



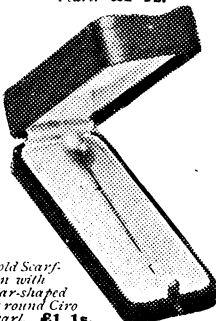
Round or pear-shaped Drop Ciro Pearl Earrings with solid gold mounts. £1 1s. per pair.



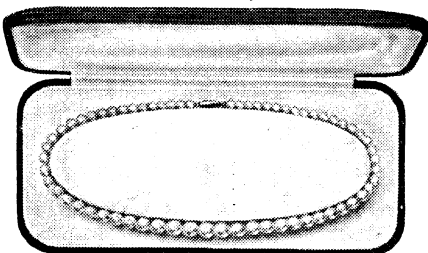
Gold-bar Brooch with unique Ciro Pearl. £1 1s.



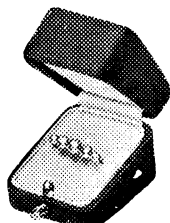
Platinum Brooch with 3 Ciro Pearls copied from the genuine. £1 1s.



Gold Scarf-pin with pear-shaped or round Ciro Pearl. £1 1s.



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and she will admire and value not only the gift, but your good taste in selecting it. Their brilliant sheen, perfect colouring, and natural form make Ciro Pearls such exact replicas of the Oriental pearl that it is impossible to tell one from the other, even when worn side by side. As a Yuletide offering nothing equals a facsimile of a valuable pearl necklace, or one of the other charming gifts shown on this page.

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RUSTIC RAILWAY TIME.

THE village inn in Essex where I took tea the other evening is only two miles from a railway station, but my request for a time-table created a mild excitement. The maiden who waited on me referred the matter to the landlord, who appeared in person. "I've got a time-table somewhere, sir," he said, "but I don't rightly know where to lay my hand on it. Anyhow, it's a bit old—1912 or thereabouts."

"Well," I said, "perhaps you can tell me how the trains go."

"Lizzie," he called out, "what was that train old George went up by last Tuesday?"

Voice from the kitchen: "I dunno. He left here just after dinner, and then he had to call up at the mill on the way."

"Oh, ah, so he did. Well, there used to be one about half after two. You know, that one Mrs. Rogers caught when she went to see her son in the 'orsepital."

It was then 5.30 p.m., so I slipped out and tramped to the station. I missed Mrs. Rogers's train, but I must have caught old George's, for there appeared to be only two running.

FIRST HUSBAND: I say, old man, have you heard the latest fashion rumour that ladies must dress to match the wall-paper. Another excuse for new frocks, what?

SECOND HUSBAND: Yes, I know. I'm going to have all my walls distempered a dreadful brown. That'll squash it.

THE latest alarm clock is fitted with an automatic arrangement which makes a cup of tea and heats the shaving water. This is not enough; we are looking for an alarm clock which will take us gently by the arm, raise us to a sitting position, and whisper encouraging words.

"TREES," says a forestry expert, "are liable to catch cold, and cannot withstand

draughts and winds." More trouble for the gardener!

"James, the aspen tree is shaking all over; I'm afraid it is in for a dose of the 'flu. You had better put a mustard plaster on its chest."

THERE were callers at the house, and little Charles suddenly joined in the conversation.



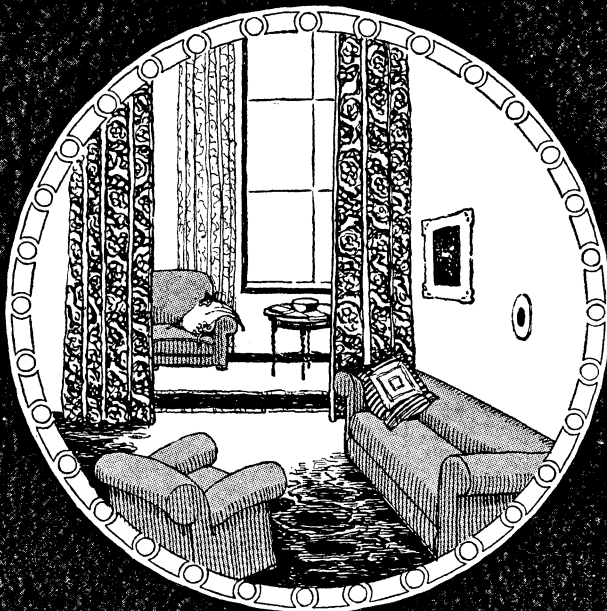
AN UNREHEARSED EFFECT.

MISSIONARY (giving lantern lecture to school): I shall now throw on the screen a picture of an animal that has a horn upon its nose and a very thick skin. It is very stupid, but is easily provoked, and should be avoided. I wonder if you can guess its name?

"We've had chicken four times this week," he volunteered politely.

"Four chickens? What luxury!" exclaimed one of the visitors, smiling.

"Oh, no," said Charles. "It was the same chicken."



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SIDE-SLIPS AT COVENT GARDEN.

By B. A. Clarke.

Two cases of special interest to opera-goers were tried yesterday at the Old Bailey. Cyril Sibthorpe, a music teacher from Beccles, accused of picking a pocket, pleaded justification, and brought a counter-charge against his victim. The theft was taken first. Mrs. Boldchild, a widow residing at Tufnell Park, testified that she made the acquaintance of the prisoner in the queue outside Covent Garden Theatre. She introduced him to the slips, where there was abundant room, although the main gallery was crowded, a service he repaid by robbing her of fifty-four shillings. She had given him no provocation.

Cross-examined by the prisoner, who conducted his own defence, the witness admitted

WITNESS: I am not here to adjudicate a guessing competition.

PRISONER: You described other performances of "Don Giovanni." Was there one that did not excel this in every particular?

WITNESS: I did not go beyond the custom of old opera-goers.

PRISONER: When I was moved to tears by the duet in the third act, which I heard to advantage because at the time the double-bassoon was being drained, did you not remark that I ought to have heard Emil Gorgonzola and Julie Roquefort in that number?

WITNESS: I may have.

PRISONER: That is all, thank you.

The prisoner then went into the witness-box. He said that he had come up to Town solely for this performance. Mrs. Boldchild's comparisons



SEASONABLE HARMONY.

"I HEAR there was a disturbance at the Christmas Goose Club last night, Michael."

"You heard wrong, then, for when Bill Brewer hit the chairman we threw him out o' the window, an' that stopped all trouble, an' everything was harmonious an' quiet."

having taken him to the stage end of the right-hand slip, where none of the action was visible, although there was ample room at the other end, where they could have seen everything.

PRISONER: Why did you do this?

WITNESS: You professed to be a music-lover, so I presumed you had come to hear.

PRISONER: So you placed me immediately above the contra-fagotto, or double-bassoon, where everything else was audible only as a pianissimo accompaniment to it.

MR. JUSTICE SHARP: The player fagetting could not be fagot.

PRISONER (when the laughter had subsided): I put it to you, Mrs. Boldchild that your motive in seeking this solitude was that you might talk to me throughout the performance?

had spoilt his enjoyment of such of the music as he heard when her pauses for breath synchronised with the periodic floodings of the bassoon. He thought it only just she should be made to reimburse him for the money he had expended so fruitlessly. He had made no levy for mental damage.

His lordship said that, the theft being admitted, he must inflict a sentence of one month's imprisonment in the second division. Mrs. Boldchild's fifty-four shillings, which had been found upon him, would be devoted to hiring a box for the first performance of Mozart's masterpiece after Mr. Sibthorpe's release. He would go under the court's personal protection.


PRISONER: Is this part of my sentence?

Half a Teaspoonful of Van Houten's Cocoa gives a breakfast-cupful of perfect enjoyment



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JUDGE: You can decline it if you like.

PRISONER (firmly): Then before I consent to be shut up alone with you, my lord, I must be assured that you have no recollections of Adelina Patti in the part of Zerlina.

JUDGE: Who was Adelina Patti?

PRISONER: I am satisfied, and accept the offer gratefully. In view of the deservedly high repute of our British judiciary, I will not ask, my lord, if you hum.

Mrs. Boldchild was then tried for criminal swank, which is defined by Blackstone as "unwarranted pretension, social or artistic, carried to lengths likely to cause breaches of the peace." Mr. Sibthorpe's evidence was virtually a repetition of that given already. Confirmation was given by the contra-fagotist, who testified that throughout the performance there came

fortissimo in self-defence, so far as was physically possible, unceasingly. This caused coolness between myself and the conductor.

JUDGE: Did he assault you?

WITNESS: No.

JUDGE: Ah!

For the defence the Covent Garden policeman said that nightly outside the gallery entrance he heard speeches as provocative as those quoted. Half the queue, if one could believe the speakers (which he had given up trying to do), were temporary exiles from dress-circle, boxes and stalls. He had never seen them attacked. The musical frauds were suffered as patiently. Last June rioting was feared the first night of "The Ring," and he was given the assistance of a mounted officer; but although in the queue there was a full muster of men who had



FITTING THE PUNISHMENT TO THE CRIME.

SHE: I hear that Jack has promised to buy Phyllis some diamond earrings if she will discontinue her singing. I suppose that means she will have to have her ears pierced.

HE: Ah, paying her back in her own coin, eh!

from the darkness above a voice which he now identified as Mrs. Boldchild's. Yes, he understood that he was on his oath.

JUDGE: Were the remarks you overheard or, rather, underheard (laughter) provocative?

WITNESS: I will give an example. The voice described a gala performance in honour of the Lama of Thibet, when the gallery seats were twenty-five shillings. And then, evidently in answer to a question, "Oh, dear, no, I was in the stalls. Mother thought it hardly *comme il faut* for young ladies to sit anywhere else. But the War has taught us all so much, hasn't it?"

JUDGE: This evidence is very painful.

WITNESS: After suffering this, I played

heard "The Ring" at Bayreuth performed much better than it was going to be inside, their remarks did not provoke any overt act. At times public indignation ran high against old opera-goers whose fathers had heard Jenny Lind, but this always stopped short of personal violence.

JUDGE: To put it in legal phraseology, the old opera-goer always gets away with it?

POLICEMAN: Yes, my lord.

The jury, without withdrawing, returned a verdict of "Not Guilty." The Judge said that Mrs. Boldchild had had a very lucky escape. Mr. Sibthorpe had been badly advised in making this a criminal charge. Criminal swank was very sharply defined as "likely to

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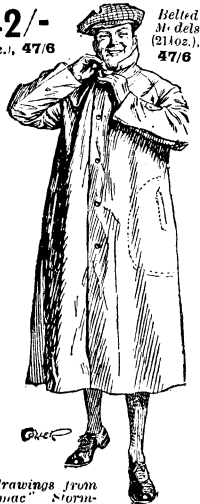
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cause a breach of the peace." Doubt upon this point alone had turned the scale in her favour. Had a civil action been brought, she must have been mulcted in heavy damages.

The prisoner Sibthorpe was being led away when he turned round excitedly. "My lord, my lord, I claim your protection. The warden says that at my age he suffered a much stiffer sentence."

JUDGE: It was a most improper remark.

"THESE are not my figures, ladies and gentlemen," said the statistician on the platform; "they are the figures of a man who knows what he is talking about."



"I SAY, Daddy," Harry demanded, "what part of the body is the vocabulary?"

"Why, Harry?"



THE CHRISTMAS POST.

Hi, Bill! These 'as to go. 'Arf a mo' while I sling 'em round yer neck!

As long as the grass in a public park is healthy and green the citizens seem to look upon it as some sort of garden and keep off it, as the signs command them. When it begins to die out, however, their respect for it instantly vanishes.

A man in a hurry started one day to cut across a yellowing patch in the upper park, but was stopped by a policeman.

"What difference does it make?" demanded the citizen. "The grass is half dead already."

"But," said the indignant officer, "if ye had a sick friend, would ye be walkin' on his stomach?"

"Oh, teacher said Billy Smith had a large vocabulary for his age."



CUSTOMER (pointing to sweets in a bottle): How do they run?

Village Shopkeeper: They don't *run*; we puts 'em in the scale.



SMALL BOY: That prize for the Cambridge-shire—do they allow the owner anything, or does it all go to the horse?

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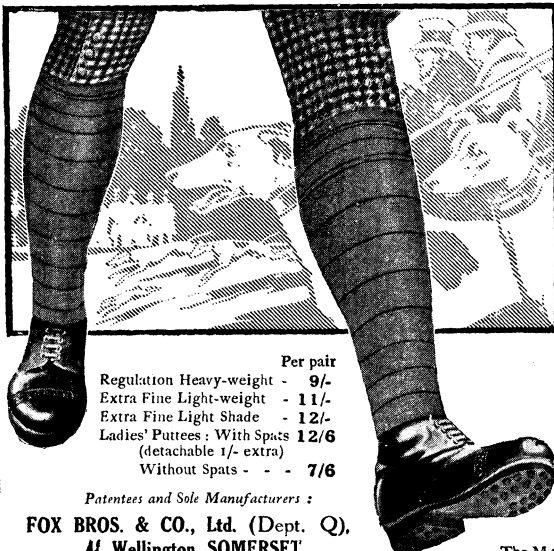
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THE SPRINGTIME OF LIFE. BY FREDERIC WHITING.

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“ ‘Begging your pardon, lady,’ he said, ‘but I’ve made a mistake and come to the wrong ’ouse. Don’t you make a fuss, and I’ll go quiet, an’ touch nothing.’ ‘There isn’t much to take,’ the lady said in a voice which made him think of a church.”

THE WRONG HOUSE

By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

THE catch of the kitchen window yielded easily, and Bill Simmons had no difficulty in finding his way to the dining-room by the “service” entrance. He was feeling round the wall for the switch of the electric lights, when they flashed out suddenly. He turned and saw a tall, fair lady in a blue dressing-gown at the other end of the long room. The lady looked so much more holy than anything he had imagined, that violence was out of the question; and, moreover, Bill had a grain of chivalry in his burglarious soul. “ ‘E’s never so much as laid a ’and on me,” his wife boasted.

“Begging your pardon, lady,” he said, “but I’ve made a mistake and come to the wrong ’ouse. Don’t you make a fuss, and I’ll go quiet, an’ touch nothing.”

“There isn’t much to take,” the lady said in a voice which made him think of a

church. “Are you in great need, that you are driven to this? Perhaps I might give you enough for a Christmas dinner, if it’s that.”

Bill believed that he blushed. He certainly felt like it.

“Blimy——” he began.

“Don’t swear,” the lady told him.

“Beg pardon, lady,” he apologised humbly. “Dessay you took it for an excuse, being copped. But it’s a fac’. Mistook the ’ouse I did. Owing to liquor. Not drunk, I wasn’t, but, being Christmas Eve, had enough to make me careless-like. The crib I was looking for was—well, someone else’s. Fac’!”

“Was it need drove you to it?” the vision wanted to know. “Were you starving?”

“No-o,” he owned. “It’s my perfeshon, you see.”

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"Then," she told him, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Dessay I ought," he owned. "A bloke must do something for a living."

"He should work," she stated. "A great, strong man like you. Why don't you do honest work?"

"Ah!" he said. "Work? Been told that before. Church visitors and them. Might 'ave paid more attention if they'd spoke more like you, lady. If you don't mind, I'll be going. No damage done, you'll find. Just slipped a catch of the kitchen window. Your servants don't lock up careful. Best keep an eye to 'em, lady. . . Begging your pardon." He backed through the "service" door to the kitchen. "Wishing you a merry Christmas, if no offence," he said, touching his cap.

"Wait a moment," the lady commanded. He took a step back from the shadow toward the light. "How poor are you?"

"Middlin' poor," he thought. "Off and on. Depends on 'ow my business 'as gone, you see. The fences get most out of it, an' that's a fac', lady."

"Have you a wife and children?" she inquired.

"Three," he said. "Three kids. One wife. Roof over our 'eads. Firing for the kitchen. Enough to eat and drink. Clothes to our backs. Not what you'd call poor—not like some."

"How old are the children?" she demanded.

"Now you've got me." He scratched his head. "Well, 'Arry might be somewhere about four year. Sharp little nipper, too. And Rosalie—"

"Rosalie?" the lady queried. She smiled a wonderful faint smile.

"Name as 'er mother got out of a tale. 'Lady Rosalie' she wanted 'er to be christened, but the parson cut the 'Lady' out. Too good for the like of us. She might be two or three. Dunno. About that 'eight from the floor." He held out his hand. "Got a tongue like 'er mother's—always a-wagging. And the things she says! 'Why doesn't farver go to 'eaven?' she wants to know. 'What 'ud 'e do there?' 'er mother arks. 'Nick them gold 'arps,' sez she. Funny ideas kids 'ave got!"

"I suppose you wouldn't be above taking them?" the lady suggested. "But I'm afraid you won't get in, Mr.—Mr. Burglar!"

"Simmons, the name is," he told her. "In confidence, lady, and not to be mentioned to the police."

"I shall not mention it to the police, Mr. Simmons," she assured him. "And your third child?"

"Baby," he told her. "Nigh on a year. Born when I was in—well, 'doing time,' to be candid, lady—and ought to have been a lesson to me."

"To give up stealing," she said.

"P'raps so," he owned; "but I was thinking of drink. Never been copped, if I'd kept off it. In my line you can't afford to be fuzzy. Want your wits about you. Anything more, lady, you'd like to arsk?"

Women, he reflected, were strangely inquisitive persons, even ladies that looked like a holy princess who might be painted on a church window.

"I was not questioning you merely from curiosity," the lady explained. Her voice, he thought, was like the soft part of a church organ. "I was wondering whether you had bought any Santa Claus presents for your little children?"

"Sweets," he told her, "and some toys off the street barrows; a few pence apiece. Wouldn't run to more."

"Well," she said, "I was thinking. I have some toys upstairs. The children they were meant for—they won't be with me this Christmas."

She sighed as a saint might sigh.

"Lady," Bill sympathised earnestly, "I'm sorry. Stewth—not meaning to swear—I'm sorry. You lost them?"

"For this Christmas," she said. "They—well, I thought they were coming, and they aren't. I was afraid I couldn't get the toys there in time. So I telegraphed to a shop near their house to send others. The children are older than yours. The baby is three. But I think the toys will do. If you wait, I will go upstairs and fetch them."

"Ah!" muttered Mr. Simmons. "Wait, eh?"

He looked round rather suspiciously.

"I am not going to call anybody," she told him, "if that is what you fear. It is only . . . I was thinking about my children when you came in. I—I came down to look at something."

She scarcely moved her head, but Mr. Simmons had no doubt that her eyes turned to a portrait on the mantelpiece—the portrait of a rather stern-faced young man. Mr. Simmons saw nothing holy about *him*—would have liked to "bash his head" if he wasn't good to the lady.

"I take it kind," he acknowledged,

"very kind; not quite seeing why you should trouble about my kids."

"I should like to make other children happy at Christmas," she explained, "if I can't make my own—well, not just now. We have the children in turn, my husband and I."

"I take it," Mr. Simmons observed, "that you and 'im 'ave 'ad a bust-up?"

"A separation," she amended, "by mutual agreement. That's all. Incompatibility of temperament."

"As bad as that!" cried Mr. Simmons. "Drinks, I suppose?"

"No, he does not drink. Will you wait while I get the toys for your children, Mr. Simmons? I have no thought of betraying you, no wish to. I don't suppose I would try to send you to prison even if you had taken things. I am too unhappy myself to want to make others unhappy."

"It's a cruel shame," he thought, "and I'll chance waiting, lady; and you needn't worry as I'll touch things. Wait outside if you'd prefer."

"It is raining," she said. "You will be more comfortable here. If you are hungry, there are some things to eat in the side-board. I will fetch the toys."

She went out. Mr. Simmons looked all round the room, and especially at the portrait on the mantelshelf.

"Rummost go I ever knew," he reflected. "The missus'll never believe 'ow I come by the toys, and none too ready to believe things as it is. Best tell 'er as I broke in the emporium, an' not lay myself open to suspicion by tellin' the truth. Rummy thing as he'd want to be separated from 'er. Black-guard, I suppose, an' she was too good for 'im. Funny that sort of bloke should want the kids, though. Bus'ness 'tween a man an' a woman is all funny bus'ness, if you ask me, an' you can't never say 'ow it will turn out. People 'ud say as my brother Jack an' 'is missus was very like Em'ly an' me, an' so they are. They don't get on, an' 'e can't manage 'er. not even if he larrups 'er. Me an' Em'ly 'it it more or less, an' no good promisin' 'er a 'iding. 'Do it now!' she says. An' makes me look a fool. All the same, I can manage 'er—more or less. 'Nuf for me . . . An' that bloke an' the lady can't 'it it. Seem to know 'is face. . ."

He approached a little nearer—not too near, because the lady might be frightened to find him close when she returned—studied the portrait hard, scratched his

head, and studied it again; suddenly slapped his leg.

"Blimy!" he muttered. "I've got 'im. I've got the blighter! Old Jacobs mixed up 'im an' 'is wife; thought this was 'is 'ouse, and the one at Delsham 'ers . . . Stayner, that's the chap; and she'll be Mrs. Stayner . . . Stain-glass winder. That's what she's like. Mo' said 'e was separated from 'is missus. Wonder if they run the two o'clock train Christmas mornings? Might get over to the *right* 'ouse, an' help 'im off with a few things! . . . Umph! Sounds like 'er comin'."

The lady appeared with her arms full of parcels. He retreated to the far end of the room.

"If you'll put 'em on the table, lady," he proposed, "I'll take 'em when you've stood back."

She put them on the table.

"I am not afraid of you," she told him. "You will think of your innocent little children, as I think of mine. This is a box of tools, Mr. Simmons. You will take care that your little boy doesn't hurt himself with them, won't you? I meant to be very careful to watch Percy. He is seven, and your little boy is—four, you think. Three years younger. So you must look after him very carefully, and tell your wife to. Please don't be *too* angry with him if he does a little damage with the things. Boys don't—don't always think. They want someone to—to—" She wiped her eyes. "I shall give him tools when he comes here at Easter," she stated. "I didn't send them to my—his father's—I wasn't sure whether they would look after him carefully enough."

"Not like you would, lady," Mr. Simmons thought, "not like *you*. An' if 'e destroyed things, 'is father might be 'asty with 'im."

"I was thinking of the servants," the lady said. "His father is good to him—to all of them. He would show him how to use the tools better than I could. . . These are soldiers, and a book, and paints. They were all for—they are for your big boy. The doll and the tea-things and—and all these—were for . . . I hope your little girl will like them. Would you mind suggesting to your wife that if she let her have a little tea in them—real tea—she wouldn't make *much* mess, if she was *helped*. I dare say your wife likes playing with her little girl? . . . I did. . ."

"For Heavin's sake, lady," Mr. Simmons implored, "don't take on like that!"

"I'm not taking on," the lady denied, "but you can't help thinking of things."

It occurred to Mr. Simmons that women were very much alike. His missus and the

baby. Some are a little old for her, but she can hug the doll. Do you know, Mr. Simmons—men don't understand, but you might mention it to your wife—you can



"DEAR SIR—This coms in confidens to tell you your wife is in grate trubbel having none of the kids at X. Mas and not wishing to interfeer betwin man an wife which never does mutch good. . . ."

stained-window lady evidently bought their logic at the same shop.

"Of course you can't," he agreed soothingly, "in course you can't. Do Rosalie proud they will, them things, and the boy."

"These," she said, "will be for your

teach children a deal by teaching them to love their dolls. They should never be allowed to be rough with them, or they will grow up rough themselves. But my little Mabel was naturally kind to her dolls. She is of an affectionate dis-dis-po-si-si——"

The lady broke down. "Don't—don't—think of things, lady," Simmons entreated.

"What's the use of telling people not to do what they can't help doing?" she wanted to know. "How would your wife like to be without her children at Christmas-time?"

"Don't suppose she wouldn't," he

"Why not?" he wondered.

"You don't understand women," she charged him.

"No, lady. Never met anyone as did. I take it, you wouldn't see no objection, if I could get over there to-night, to my—paying him a little visit, and——"



"... Its hard on her for a woman missis her kids at this seeson, an worrid about there toys an if they will be lookt after proper. . . . We hope it will all come rite. Hoping this will find you as it leves us no more at present from—Too WELWISHERS."

thought, "or any other time. Thinks a deal of 'em. If she an' me 'ad 'ad a—wot you called it—an' I 'ad the kids, strike me if I don't think I'd lend 'er one for Christmas if she arst for it."

"I dare say," the lady thought, "he would. I didn't ask him, you see."

"Oh," the lady cried, aghast, "you wicked man! You'd steal from *my husband!* You *horrible* man!"

"Well," said Mr. Simmons, "well, not if 'e behaved as such; but things being as they *are* . . . Well, it beats me. All a woman you are, lady! 'Owsomever, I won't

take nothink of 'is. Swear it on the Book, if you like to bring one."

"I'll take your word," the lady said.

"Thank you, Mr. Simmons."

"Thank you, lady," he said. "You do me proud; and, if ever there's anything I can do for you—if you wanted a little 'elp to—wot yer call it?—kidnap them kids any time—"

"Oh, dear, no," she declined. "He is entitled to his share of them. I think he is nearly as fond of them as I am. Of course, we could each have one or two always, but we think it is best for children to be brought up together. . . Some of the presents will go in that bag of yours. I suppose you can carry the rest. You may take them."

"Thank you, lady." He commenced to load the bag, turning it inside out first to show that he had put nothing else in it. "In course it's best for kids to grow up together," he observed, "and— Well, I dunno the ways of ladies and gentlemen. Rather 'ard face 'e's got." He jerked his head at the portrait.

"If you dare to say things against my husband," the lady cried, "I'll—I'll—well, I *would* call the police, if it weren't for your children! He is not really hard at all, only unreasonable over some things. I don't put all the blame on him. It's just incompatibility of temperament."

"Ah!" said Mr. Simmons. "Meanin' as you look at things a bit different, perhaps? Me an' the missus does—an' got a tongue, she 'as!—but. . . It's like this, lady. It's best for kids not to know of it: 'Never you dare to contradic' me before the children,' Em'ly says, 'an' I never won't you, an' never don't. An' if you do, I'll scrag you.' Which is a figger of speech, 'cause she ain't no size; but I know what she means. Seems to me, lady, as if you an' 'im 'ad best sink this uncomfortability of temper—that's what you call it, ain't it?—for the sake of the kids, an'—"

"Don't you dare to lecture *me*!" the lady cried. She stamped her foot. "You mend your own wicked ways, and—and"—the tears came welling in her eyes again—"be good to your own wife, even if she *has* a tongue. All women have."

"I was noticing, lady," he agreed. He picked up the last parcel. "Thanking you very kindly."

"And," she said, "if you and she have a quarrel, a man ought to be the one to offer to make it up, not expect the woman to. She *can't*. You understand that. . . A

merry Christmas to you, Mr. Simmons, and—try to find a different business, for the sake of your wife and children. God bless you all!"

Mr. Simmons managed to hug the parcels in one arm, so that he could touch his cap, and backed away.

"If it ain't a liberty, lady," he said, "I 'ope as 'e'll put things right for you; an' wish as I could lend a 'and! Compliments of the season, lady!" He went through the door, returned for a second. "'Ave a neye to them servants of yours in lockin' up," he advised earnestly. "Careless, they are. An' mind you bolt the back door after me. Gawd bless yer, lady!"

The lady was sitting at the table with her head on her arms. She nodded acknowledgment without raising it.

"A lady is wonderful like a woman in 'er ways," he reflected, as he trudged away into the night. "Contradicks 'erself in one breath, an' turns on yer for agreein' with 'er. An' sees through yer, if yer don't mind. 'Eavin' knows what tale I'd best make up for Em'ly. If I says I got 'em from the emporium, she'll want to 'ide 'em away, an' find out they wasn't never broke into. Might try tellin' 'er the truth for once! An' rather like to 'ear what she thinks of this uncomfortability of temper bus'ness."

Mrs. Simmons gave a prompt and decisive opinion on the subject.

"Ladies an' gentlemen," she pronounced, "aren't no different from men and women. Just a pair of fools, like you an' me! But you don't get rid of *me* by no tempers, if they're ever so uncomfortable. An' I can give as good as I get, an' don't you forget. Not that I've anythink to complain of, Bill, and I'd fair break my 'eart over you, if I wouldn't own to it. . . Got 'er 'ead down on the table an' cryin', you said. An' 'e don't care, an' I don't suppose *you* would. Men are all—"

"No, they ain't," Mr. Simmons denied. "Yer know as I *would* care, my gal. An' like enough 'e would, if 'e knew 'ow she was takin' it. . . Like to tell 'im, I would. . . Dashed if I don't, too! I'm going over there."

"You'll get given in charge, if you go an' kick up a row with 'im," Mrs. Simmons protested.

"Shan't kick up no row," Mr. Simmons denied.

"You mayn't mean to," his wife conceded, "but you'll say things; an' one

thing leads to another, an' you know what you are, Bill! There'll be 'uncomfortable temper' between you and 'im. Don't you do it, mate. For the sake of the kids an' me—if I reckon."

"'Ow many more times 'ave I got to tell you you do?" he grumbled; but he laid his hand on her shoulder. "Never fancied no one else, old gal," he owned. "'Ere, give us a kiss."

"Not 'er?" Mrs. Simmons asked rather suspiciously.

"Like yer fancy a church winder," he stated. "Them winders of coloured gals; saints, don't they call 'em? An' spoke very nice about you, she did. . . 'Ow would it be if I went 'nonymous, like they call it? Just dropped a letter in 'is box? You could 'elp me write it; use some of the fine words out of your books."

"Near forgotten them," she thought. "Not much time for books nowadays, with three kids. But it's an 'appy thought, Bill. Sort of Christmas card, looking to the time. An' I wouldn't be for wasting time over fine words that we mightn't know the spelling of, but give 'em the credit of 'avin' feelin's, like a 'uman man an' woman."

And out of Mr. and Mrs. Simmons's human feelings—which were greatly touched by the gifts to their children—a curious epistle grew by the light of two candles, and Mr. Simmons pronounced the work of heart a work of art.

Mr. Stayner was very restless on the night of Christmas Eve. He thought it was due to playing billiards too long in a smoky room. It was one of the many advantages of separation from an exacting and rather nervy wife that a man could stay out and have a little game. His billiards were improving in consequence. He had beaten Rogers, and made breaks of 33 and 35, and the marker said that, with regular practice, he would soon get hold of the "top of the table game"—that will-o'-the-wisp of amateurs. Also he could read by the fire after he came in. But there were a few little disadvantages. He had fallen asleep and the fire had gone out, and the Christmas decorations annoyed him. He had put them up earlier in the evening to please the children. Percy had kept asking whether "Queen" was coming home for his Santa Claus. He insisted on using his father's name for his mother.

"I wonder she didn't ask for one of the kids for Christmas," he thought. "But I suppose she thinks I ought to have offered

it. And I ought. Poor old Queen! Perhaps I should have allowed a bit more for her nerves. Women go through a lot. Nearly went under with Mabel. Hanged if I can sleep! Get up and read, I think."

He put on his dressing-gown, the old one that his wife wanted him to give away. Women never understand how a man's heart clings to those old friends. Then he lit the gas-fire in his bedroom and tried to read; found that a novel bored him, and that a magazine bored him more; tried a book on billiards; thought he had become interested in the question of "transmitted side," but discovered that he was puzzling out the wrong diagram for the letterpress; tried a hand at poker-patience and remembered how his wife scoffed at it. "A game for one isn't any game at all!"

"Dashed if she wasn't right!" he snapped, and brushed the cards aside. He paced the room several times, and then took a photograph out of a drawer.

"Never liked the look of anyone quite so well," he owned; "but, of course, she *is* good-looking . . . I don't know . . . I wish I'd asked if she wanted one of the kids for Christmas. I wonder if she's at her own place, the house her aunt left her? She gave that address when she sent the toys for the children—at least, the letter to say she'd ordered them at Pleasant's. She gave it for them to write to, I suppose. And for me to know, perhaps. I wonder if she thought—Heaven knows what she thinks. She doesn't herself very often. Even her own people say she's a bit difficult. Well, they say *I* am. I remember what old Uncle George said to us, when he'd just heard that we were engaged. 'You two are taking on a devilish tough job. You'll need a lot of patience before you're through with it. But *if* you make a good job of it, it will be a *very* good job. So stick to it. Give and take, give and take, my dears!' I seem to have done a good bit of giving, but I'm hanged if I'm not a good mind to wire to-morrow and say, 'Do you want one of the youngsters for Christmas?' . . . What's that? . . . I'll swear the front gate clicked."

He turned out the light and peeped through the venetian blind. Nothing noticeable. . . That was the letter-box clicking. Someone had put something in it. Or was it the sound of a window fastening forced back? The letter-box presumably, as a dark figure was going away from the front door, apparently a heavily-built man of medium height. Now he must pass the lamp. Umph!

Too much muffled to make out his face. A rough chap of the stock burglar type.

It suddenly occurred to Stayner that he had been burgled, and that the noises which he had heard were caused, not by the thieves' entrance, but by their exit. He seized a loaded cane and crept downstairs. One had gone, but perhaps others were still in the house. He hoped so. He was a strong man, and his nerves were irritable from sleeplessness, and he rather liked the prospect of a fight with them. He remembered, as he stole down the cold stairs, that he had always told his wife that, being insured against burglary, he should only go to sleep again if she woke him for noises; and she had always told him that it was exactly what he wouldn't do. Evidently she was right.

He could hear nothing of anyone about, however. When he turned up the lights, he found no signs of anyone. Presently he discovered a letter in the box. It was in a flimsy envelope, addressed in a half-formed hand to "Mr. Stainer." He carried it upstairs, turned up the bedroom light, and sat down in front of the fire. Then he opened it and read it.

DEAR SIR,

This coms in confidens to tell you your wife is in grate trubbel having none of the kids at X. Mas and not wishing to interfere betwin man an wife which never does mutch good an not nowing the rites of it an genraly folts on both sides but she didn't say a word against you So dont blame her for this letter.

Its hard on her for a woman missis her kids at this seeson, an worrid about there toys an if they will be lookt after proper not to hurt thereselfs, childrin being careles, but nose you will do all you can, but not like there mar. It is not to be expeckt.

We beleve she wood meat you harf way if you was disposed to make it up which we humbly sugest a man an woman can git along if they make up there mines.

It wood be a nise Santy Clos if you took the kids over to her on X. Mas mornig but go yourself do not send by a servant a man an his wife shoold never have there quarrls befour the young stirs or let them no.

We hope it will all come rite.

Hoping this will find you as it leves us no more at present from

TOO WELWISHERS.

"Well," Mr. Stayner gasped, when he had read it, "well! If it weren't for the writing, and if I hadn't seen the ruffian who

left it, I'd think it was a stunt of Queen's to pull my leg. She's clever enough—and artful enough—for anything. The spelling is too bad to be genuine. But she couldn't have written that hand. One of her servants, I should think. If it's genuine. . . Does it matter? It's a good straight tip, anyway. I'm half a mind to bet on it. More than half a mind. Of course it's being the one to give in. Queen will score over me. Now, that's wrong. If there's one thing sure about old Queen, it's that anyone scores off her by being generous to her. There's nothing mean about my—about *her*. Well, she is my wife. I'm hanged if I don't take the youngsters. I must get them up early. Nine-seven the train will be, same as Sundays. When Queen sees us. . . By Jove! . . ."

* * * * *

Mrs. Stayner was having a solitary breakfast, and scarcely knowing that she had it.

"Anyone can guess what her mind's on," the housemaid told the cook. "She keeps looking at the children's photos, and at his too, when she thinks you aren't noticing. Never could make the business out. In course she's a bit jumpy at times, and there's no doubt she's got a temper, but nothing that can't be put up with. I tell you straight, I like her myself."

"Nerves," the cook pronounced, "nerves. Sort of hysteria it was, and they always turn on them they like best. A handful she was to him. Still, he ought to have made more allowances. But there's no sense in men. I'd say he was fond of her, and her of him. If he'd just come and wish her the compliments of the season, she'd soon—"

"Cook!" the housemaid gasped. "Cook!"

She pointed through the basement window to two children running up the path. A tall gentleman followed, leading a smaller child by the hand.

"Bless my soul!" cook cried. "Bless my soul! Don't say a word to her, Mary. Show 'em right in. *Push 'em in!*"

But there was no need to show them in. Mrs. Stayner had caught sight of them through the breakfast-room window. There was a rush of skirts in the passage. The front door was thrown open so wildly that it banged against the wall as it went back, and Mrs. Stayner flew down the path.

"Children!" she cried. "My children! Dick! Oh, *my Dick!*"

Mr. Simmons, who had seen the early train in—"just to walk down breakfast," he explained—and followed from a distance, stood behind the hedge and rubbed his hands.

"Well," he reflected, "*he* hasn't gone to the wrong house, and I won't say

as I did. There's a Providence in things!"

Little did he think that Providence had its eye on him, and that the master and mistress of that house were its destined instruments to turn him into an honest and prosperous man.



DREAMS FOR THE BUYING.

ARE there no dreams for the buying
In the whole of London Town?
In all these shops so full of things,
From hats and shoes to diamond rings,
Is there no store with a counter of dreams
In the whole of this London Town?

There are no dreams for the buying
In the whole of London Town:
But put up your purse and make your way
A beggar in London for one whole day,
And you'll find your dreams all scattered about
Through the whole of London Town.

There are dreams for the seeking and searching
Through this dear old London Town.
In City church; in old-time square;
Caught in the boughs of a plane tree bare;
Oh, yes, if you want them, you'll find your dreams
In plenty in London Town.

There are dim, grey courts just dream-full
Somewhere in London Town;
While all along the riverside
Dreams ebb and flow with the changing tide,
And there's one dear dream I keep to myself
Well hid in London Town.

LETITIA WITHALL.

HOW TO GOLF AND HOW NOT TO GOLF

By SANDY HERD

In a chat with Clyde Foster.

Illustrated from new photographs taken especially for this article by Sport & General.

THE Editor of THE WINDSOR MAGAZINE has invited me to write an instructional article on golf, giving a lesson on paper, so to speak.

People who come to me for golf lessons may be divided into three classes—learners, unlearners, and improvers.

Suppose you come to me as a learner who has never yet played a round. I take you to a quiet part of the course, out of everybody's way. There is no need for balls. My first concern is to teach you the golf swing.

If you will give me patient attention, I shall put you on the right road—only a short way to begin with, but a yard on the right road is worth a mile on the wrong road. At least fifty per cent. of golfers still play golf hopelessly after years of practice. If you are wise, you will be warned in time.

The pleasures of golf are increased a thousandfold when it is played correctly. Those who merely knock the ball about, trusting to luck more than to good guidance, miss all the charms and sweetness of the game.

It is easy to play golf well very soon. I could tell of a well-known Yorkshire player who came to me at the age of forty-five as a learner.

"I want to advance by slow but sure stages, Sandy," he said.

"You're my man," said I.

After a series of lessons I saw no more of him for three months. Then one day he wrote, asking me to play him a round and give him half a stroke a hole. We played and halved the match.

I asked him where he had been and what he had been doing to make such wonderful progress, for he played beautiful golf without the semblance of pressing in his

tee shots. I half feared he might say that he had been taking lessons elsewhere.

"I have been practising hard since I last saw you," he said. "I made a careful note of all you told me, and have practised for two hours a day since."

That is the sort of pupil to do credit to a teacher. He now does credit to a handicap of plus 2 in a South of England club.

As a learner you must not attempt a full swing for some time. The golf swing consists of five sections—the quarter swing, the half swing, the three-quarter swing, the full swing when the club lies horizontally over the shoulders, with the toe of the head pointing to the ground, and the downward swing, when the club descends on the line by which it ascended.

These sections must be distinctly understood by the pupil, as he proceeds to graft them smoothly into each other. There is no need to be alarmed. It is all easy with careful practice.

And, this above all, do not imagine that golf cannot be played without the full swing. Everything depends on the build of a player as to the length of swing he should stick to. The part of the swing that determines the flight of the ball consists of about three feet before it is struck and one foot afterwards, however far momentum may carry the club-head round.

It is perfect timing that works all the wonders. When this is attained, the pupil looks up and smiles at the ease with which an astonishingly fine shot is made. Golfers can recall shots of this description, and many pray for their return. Their prayers would be answered at any time if they had an intelligent idea of how the shot happened.

This is why I want the learner to begin



THE DRIVE. I—ADDRESSING THE BALL.

with the scales, so to speak, and not to want to play classical music in a month.

I.

So now take up your driver. I place a brown leaf on the grass or direct your eye to a daisy. Why not a ball? Because the result of your first efforts would tend to dishearten you.

The first section of the swing consists of taking the club back with a straight left arm, till the need for bending the elbows is felt.

The left heel is slightly off the ground, and the left knee is just beginning to bend. These things happen naturally. There is hardly any need to think of them. They come of themselves.

The reason for straightening out the arms at the start of the back swing is to get the hands well out for the final blow. The golf swing is not made like a cartwheel. It is almost an oval—the hands must go well out to come swiftly through.

I shall ask you to make this half swing many times till you seem to have got the hang of it. Of course the half swing is too short for long driving. But tag the next

section on to it, and the advance is most encouraging.

II.

Now the elbows come into operation. Elbows and wrists play a great part in golf. Having thrown the left arm well out, you bend the elbows in going on with the upward swing, till the club-head lies over the right shoulder, considerably short of the horizontal.

Swings cannot be adapted to inches. The best of us vary the length of our swings, and it is certainly true, both here and in America, that the trend to-day is towards shorter swinging for accuracy.

In making this three-quarter swing, the eye, of course, rests on the ball, or the place where the ball should be. The head remains comfortably still, neither lifting nor swaying.

From this position you can make a rhythmic swing that will give you a sense of speed and power. There must not be a vestige of jerking or stabbing, just a nice smooth, swift sweep through, after the wrists have come into position at the top.

Whatever you do, don't hurry. Don't fall asleep at the top, either, but perform the shot in the way that commands power and keeps direction. The long straight ball must come. There is no road to it



THE DRIVE. II—THE QUARTER SWING: WHERE THE WRISTS START TO BEND.

but correct golf. It is the character of his shots, not the length of them, that marks the golfer. Golf is an art, and a fine art, too.

III.

Now we go on to the full swing.

The club must not be "lifted" or "pitched" or "dragged" back. It must be "swung" back. When the horizontal is reached, a barely imperceptible pause may be made, by way of making sure that the left wrist has come almost under the club shaft.

What I mean is, that you must not begin the downward swing as if you were anxious



THE DRIVE. III—THE HALF SWING: THE LEFT ARM BECOMES STRAIGHT, THE BICEPS OF IT BRUSHING THE LEFT BREAST POCKET.

to get it over. Haste spells disaster and disaster is disheartening. I am always on the look-out against a pupil becoming down-hearted.

That is why I am constantly saying: "Wait for the wrists! Wait for the wrists to come into position!"

We all go wrong at times through neglecting this fundamental guiding principle.

Haste throws the hands in front. All the vim then goes out of the shot. Try hitting a nail with a hammer. The right sort of blow is made when the hammer-head "falls" on the nail.

"Let the club-head do the work" is an excellent rule to follow in golf. Do this, and you will immediately see the force of it.

The full swing is the ideal swing, but it must not be too full. A three-quarter swing is better than a swing that causes the player to lose control of the club. You should work up by degrees to the full swing, going smoothly all the time.

IV.

Suppose now you have reached that stage when the full swing seems to suit you. Don't trouble about the "open" face and the "shut" face. Such things are not for you yet—in fact, they are of no very great importance to anybody.

No golfer took fewer liberties with the natural swing than Harry Vardon, whose golf at its best has been the best the world ever saw. His style always was capable of being imitated. Hundreds of good golfers owe their success to the study of Vardon's natural methods.

At the top of the full swing, the club should lie horizontal, with no dip on the club-head. By dipping or dropping the club-head after the swing is completed, you lose control and balance, thus throwing the swing out of gear. The left arm forms a half circle at top of swing.

Your club in coming to the horizontal across the right shoulder, a few inches out from the nape of the neck, arrived there by the

line it must take in the down swing. There is no going up one way and coming down another.

Be careful not to pull the hands in towards the body in coming down. Throw the club-head out from you at the start of the descent. The effect of this is to bring the club well behind the ball—and not down on it—for the blow. There must be an element of sweep in the hit, or an element of hit in the sweep.

But unless the club comes at the ball almost on a plane for two or three feet, the result will be a high, short shot at the best.



THE DRIVE. IV—THE THREE-QUARTER SWING.

The reason for this is easily seen. Without it there can be no follow through.

One great golfer, we know, decries the "follow through," and says he gets his long drives without it. I have watched him, and found that he follows through quite as much as any of us, but does not finish over his left shoulder. That is all the difference. His back swing is full. He comes down at such terrific speed that he has no choice but to follow through.

A last word to the learner.

Be sure you know what you are doing. Don't be always playing matches with men of your class. Go out alone and practise, as I have been telling you. Proceed by degrees. Don't doom yourself to be a comparative duffer for years when patient study will put you on the sure road to success.

I know young men, strong as lions and supple as panthers, who have golfed (after a fashion) for years and can still be beaten easily by men old enough to be their

fathers who have studied the game and know what they are doing.

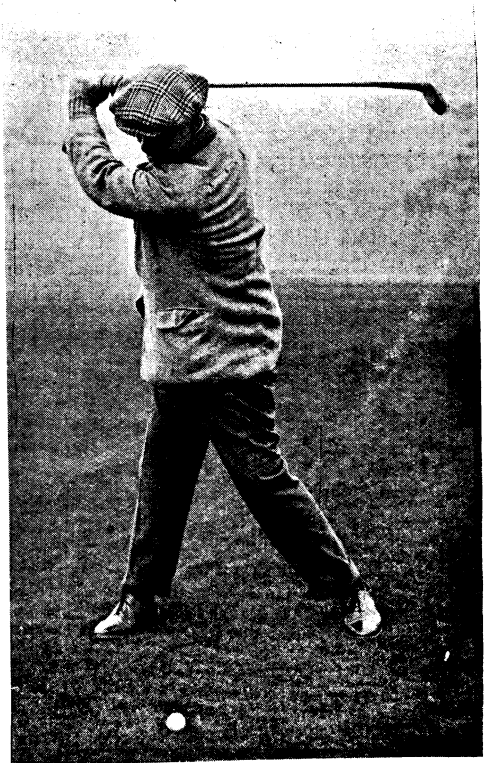
The young man in the twenties or early thirties who, after playing for years, is yet not good enough for a low single-figure handicap—well, there is no excuse for him, and his only hope is to join the great body of unlearners.

V.

By unlearners I mean golfers who have gone so far along the wrong lines that they need a thorough overhauling. They are a constant source of disappointment to themselves and their partners, one day playing fairly well and the next as badly as they played at the beginning, ten or a dozen years ago.

In their case I generally find that the removal of one or two radical errors should put them right—the occasional good golf they play proves that it is in them.

Do you belong to this class? If so, let me see what I can do for you. It must be true of erratic golf that the rhythm has



THE DRIVE. V—THE FULL SWING. NOTE THE HORIZONTAL LINE OF THE CLUB AND THE HALF-CIRCLE FORMED BY THE LEFT ARM. THERE IS NO DIP OF THE CLUB-HEAD.

gone out of your game. All golf shots, with any club, have this one feature in common—rhythm. Only this way comes what is called a “sweet” shot, when the ball is propelled with a click.

“Timing” is the result of rhythm. Jerking and “bashing” are the opposite causes of all your troubles.

Men are not all built alike, but to be good golfers they must all play alike in this respect, whatever be their styles. Ted Ray and the caddie boy who swings a stick cut from the woods observe the law of rhythm—unconsciously, it may be, but none the less certainly.

All golfers who begin as boys play properly. You began as a man, when the muscles were set. Therefore you must think it out for yourself and overcome this natural handicap.

Amazing results may be achieved if you make up your mind to give the science of golf a real chance with you. Shed all your bad habits on the spot. They have thrust themselves in your way long enough. There is greater joy in playing nice golf than in winning a match merely because your opponent played still worse than you.

It would be easy to set your head in a whirl with directions. I shall not do that.

Just play with easy confidence and, above all, play *smoothly*, and don't stiffen the wrists when hitting the ball.

In quest of more length, come through quicker, but still *smoothly*. With wooden clubs, or irons, throw the club-head after the ball *smoothly*. This applies to the mashie as well. There is no need for trick shots.

In putting, follow through with the club-head, like a pendulum, feeling the wrists working nicely. The good habits will rout the bad ones in due time. If you value your peace of mind, obey these directions.

VI.

The improver may be a golfer with a low handicap, who wants to come down to scratch, but gets no lower than, say, three or four. He has been standing still for a year or more.

If I had him before me, I would see at once what was the matter. Not unlikely he is making the mistake of substituting eagerness for concentration on the principles of golf. He worries himself out of the realisation of his ambition. Most probably his hazards are mental.

But, aside from these things, the shot that does most to make a genuine scratch golfer is the mashie shot up to the pin—not merely up to the green. Anybody can do that. So to approach as to leave the ball practically dead at four holes in a round might make all the difference. It is the mashie that makes putting easy—or difficult, according to its manipulation. Nineteen mashie shots out of every twenty are short with average golfers. Two putts (or three) may be required.



THE DRIVE. VI—THE FINISH OF THE FOLLOW THROUGH.

There is no road to scratch this way. The mashie must be mastered. I saw a scratch man playing a two man the other day. It all turned on the scratch man's ability to play mashie shots up to the pin.

Though born and bred at St. Andrews, where they play the run-up shot, I advocate pitching and stopping with the mashie. The Americans, among whom I recently spent three months, practise this shot in all their spare time, before or after matches. They know its value.

The way to stop a mashie shot is to give

it what we call in Scotland a "dunsh." This is done by bringing the head of the club under the ball, with the back of the left hand facing the flag. Underspin is thus imparted, without the ball being deflected. It drags forward a short way as the underspin pulls it up.

I do not believe in cutting a shot by drawing the club-head across the ball. There is no certainty of direction in this method. The "dunsh" shot is surer and simpler. You can pitch at the pin with it.

I do not know any shot more calculated to help the improver to take strokes off his handicap.

But to all classes alike one counsel outweighs every other in every department of the game.

Bring the club down by the line you take it back and up—smoothly and rhythmically. Your return ticket, so to speak, is not available by another line. That is the only royal road to golf or, if you like, the common-sense of golf.



THE CHILD ON THE BRIDGE.

SEA-BLUE were the child's eyes,
And wheaten-gold her hair.
It was on the bridge I met her;
The wind blew shrewdly there.
Her tender limbs elfin-frail were,
Her dress was thin and spare.

Over and under the arches
Gulls that had come from the sea
Swooped and screamed and sailed,
Fearless and fierce and free;
And one flew close to the child's face,
As close as close could be.

Oh, the wonderful creature
Sailing on easy wing!
I saw the light in the child's eyes
At the strange, wild thing;
She clapped her little happy hands;
I heard her laughter ring.

MICHAEL WILSON.

VALERIE FRENCH

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "*Anthony Lyveden*," "*Berry and Co.*," "*Jonah and Co.*,"
"*The Brother of Daphne*," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALMENT.—The great woodland estate of Gramarye, in the Cotswolds, was on fire, but when the news spread nobody cared, for the house was tumbling down, the park was deserted, and their owner, Colonel Winchester, was in a madhouse, to which local opinion held that he had been driven by some malign influence in this wilderness of a property. The mental breakdown of Anthony Lyveden while working for him was ascribed to the same cause. From a spur of the Cotswolds a man looked down upon the holocaust, but cared no more than anyone else, for he had lost his memory. Sitting at his feet was a small rough-haired dog for whose presence he could not account, and both were in the last stage of exhaustion when found, struggling on their way in search of food, by two privates of the R.A.S.C., in charge of a motor lorry, who sheltered and befriended them and gave them a lift to the next village. There the kindly landlord of an inn gave them hospitality, assuring Anthony Lyveden that he need not pay anything until able to do so. After bestowing upon himself and the Scalyham the names of "Jonathan" and "Hamlet," in his inability to remember even his own name, Anthony Lyveden and the dog, refreshed and grateful, set forth to seek their fortune. About this time Lady Touchstone wrote to her kinsman, Cardinal Forest, "Poor Anthony Lyveden's body was found a fortnight ago. We had him buried at Girdle," but, being on the Continent, she had not yet heard of the burning of Gramarye, and was referring to the search for Anthony, who had disappeared, and to the discovery of a dead body assumed to be his. She had gone abroad with her grief-stricken niece, Valerie French, who had been engaged to be married to Anthony, and at Dinard they made the acquaintance of an English girl, André Strongith'arm—the *fiancée* of Colonel Winchester—who gave Valerie a profoundly moving account of Anthony's life and work at Gramarye, and of the baleful influence of the place upon his brain. A day later André was recalled to England by the news of Colonel Winchester's sudden recovery.

II. ROGUES AND VAGABONDS.

THE man who had lost his memory was growing tired.

Fourteen miles he had come from the village of Broad-i'-the-Beam—he and Hamlet, his dog. So much a map would have told you. As a matter of fact, they had covered a good twenty. Ever since nine o'clock the two had gone as they pleased. Time was nothing to them, except an easy-going host. The clocks they saw and heard were jolly-faced, merry-tongued butlers, predicting meals and sleep. Did Jonathan like the look of that peeping church, the shrine had been visited. Did Hamlet, panting, declare this wood a rabbitry, the brake had been scoured. Somewhere about noon the gentle plash of water had attracted them both, and tacked a brace of miles on to their journey. The two had spent an hour beside the scrambling stream, looking for water-rats, unearthing brown pebbles, finding in 'flotsam and jetsam' a gay significance which Blackstone seems to have missed. The burden of the day became a shuttlecock: its heat, a cordial. Man and dog 'fleeted the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world.' What if they were

making for Oxford, and Oxford was yet a score of miles away? Were they not Time's guests? The city could wait. What if the two of them were growing tired? They would sleep the sounder. What if they had but sixteen shillings in the world? The morrow should take thought of itself. The past had done so—was doing so, and doing it devilish well.

The man who had lost his memory burst into song. . . .

It was at this musical juncture that the two wayfarers rounded a bend of the road to see a large brown limousine perhaps one hundred yards ahead. The car was standing idle under the grateful shadow of a convenient wood. Its back was towards them, and the business of a blue-suited chauffeur about the spare wheel behind was arguing the recent occurrence of a familiar mishap.

That there was something amiss, however, beside mere tire trouble soon became evident. Indeed, as the pair drew abreast of the workman, the latter raised his fists skywards and shook them in inarticulate fury.

Jonathan stopped still.

"What's the matter?" he said.

The man started violently, looked the

speaker up and down, and then put a finger to a coarse lip.

"Shut yer row," he whispered. He jerked his head at the car. "My bloke's asleep, 'e is. If you go an' wake 'im, there'll be the dooce."

"All right," said Jonathan quietly. "But what's the matter?"

"Lef' me spanner be'ind," was the savage reply. "Firs' a puncture: then this 'ere's the wrong wheel: now the 'ub-cap won't move."

kin give me a 'and, you kin—when I comes beck. An' if I puts in a word—why, my toff's good fer 'alf a dollar."

Jonathan hated the fellow, but two good shillings and sixpence were not to be sneezed at. Clearly the morrow was taking thought of itself. Not to encourage such initiative would be cavalier. He nodded agreement.

The other trundled the wheel down the road, and presently dived at right angles into a lane and out of sight.

Jonathan and Hamlet sat down in the



'You're a lying vagabond.
You did nothing of the kind.
You're attempting to extort
money.'

shade of the trees by the side of the road. . . . Ten minutes, perhaps, had gone by, when somebody yawned.

Hamlet leaped to his feet and put his head on one side. . . . Nothing further occurring, the dog shot his smiling master a reproachful glance and once more laid himself down.

Another yawn was luxuriously expressed.

Again the terrier started to his feet and put his head on one side. . . . After a moment he approached the car gingerly, nosing the nearest running-board, as one who suspects a booby-trap. Venturing further, he had placed two paws upon the step and was snuffing the sill of the door, when an explosion from within the limousine, in the shape of a violent inclination to sneeze violently indulged, at once confirmed his suspicions, cost him his balance, and sent him sprawling upon his back. . . .

"But if the spare wheel's no use, what's the good of taking it down?"

"So's I kin take it beck to the 'ouse an' git the right one, smarty. 'Ere, jus' 'old this catch in. Shove 'ome whiles I turn."

With a frown, Jonathan did as he was bid, and a moment later the refractory wheel-cap began to revolve.

The trick was done.

With a protruding tongue, the chauffeur lifted the wheel clear of its brackets. Then he turned to his ministrant.

"If you'll watch 'ere with the car, you

Heedless of the contingent two shillings, Jonathan roared his pent-up merriment, while Hamlet, conscious of lost dignity, retreated to the bank and, apologetically wagging his tail, trumpeted a ridiculous defiance of his invisible discomfiter.

The face, however, presently thrust out of the limousine's window should have been sobering enough.

Large, round, red, transfigured with wrath and surmounted by a vast grey hat, it was filling most of the frame, and when a tremendous fist followed it, to be shaken furiously in Hamlet's direction, there was practically no room left. The puffed-out cheeks suggested Æolus at work, blasphemously 'potted' by Aristophanes: the monstrous air, a pet of Rabelais'. Only the keen blue eyes redeemed the countenance. By rights, these should have been flaming. That they were merely bright, argued the rage skin-deep.

But for Jonathan, Red Face and Hamlet might have exchanged threatenings for half an hour. The more the one bellowed, the more the other lifted up his voice. The dog had now just cause. The extraordinary picture clamoured for criticism.

His master called Hamlet to order and took off his hat.

"I'm very sorry, sir. The dog——"

"Venomous brute," raged Red Face.

"—didn't know you were there, and when you sneezed——"

"I didn't sneeze!" shouted the other.

"Where's my chauffeur?"

Jonathan swallowed.

"I think he'll be here any minute, sir. The spare wheel was not satisfactory, and he's gone——"

"What d'you mean—'spare wheel'? What's the spare wheel got to do with it?"

"You've got a puncture, sir, and——"

"You're drunk!" roared Red Face. "Most beastly drunk. Where's the puncture?"

Swiftly Jonathan perambulated the car. *Each tire was as sound as a bell.* He returned to the near-side door in some uneasiness.

"You're perfectly right, sir. I——"

"Of course I am."

"—I must have misunderstood. When I arrived, your chauffeur was having some difficulty with the spare wheel, and I helped him to——"

"You're a lying vagabond," said the other. "You did nothing of the kind. You're attempting to extort money."

"I tell you, sir——"

"You've never set eyes on my chauffeur. You've——"

"If it hadn't been for me," retorted Jonathan, "he'd never 've had the spare wheel——"

"Goats and monkeys!" yelled Red Face. "'S the man mad?" He wrenched at the door-handle. "Lemme get out, you fool." Jonathan opened the door, for a body and limbs proportionate to the face to be launched into the road. "Now, then, what the devil d'you mean by it? Where's this spare wheel, you——"

"It's gone," said Jonathan. "The chauffeur's taken it away."

The simple announcement appeared to bereave Red Face of the power of speech. Taking advantage of the silence, Jonathan led the way to the rear of the car and pointed to the empty brackets.

"You see?" he said quietly. With bulging eyes, the stranger regarded them. "I certainly understood that you'd had a puncture, but, any way, the chauffeur's taken it back to get another."

"'Back'? " croaked Red Face. "'Back,' you gibbering fool? Back where?"

As he spoke, the beat of a coming engine made itself heard, and, without waiting for an answer, the giant stepped from behind the car to peer up the road.

A moment later a Ford came to rest alongside, and a spruce little man in fawn-coloured livery descended, filter in hand, and touched his hat.

"Where the devil have you been?" demanded his employer.

"Quick as I could, sir"—cheerfully.

"You lying hound," said the other. "You've stopped at every pub. for miles round. You know you have. Where's the spare wheel?"

The chauffeur stared at its room.

"It was there when I left, Sir Andrew."

"What?"

Jonathan put in his oar.

"This isn't the chauffeur I helped," he said. There was a dreadful silence. "In fact," he added stoutly, "I'm afraid—I'm awfully sorry, but the more I think of it, the more afraid I am that I've helped some fellow or other to pinch your wheel."

The murder was out.

For a moment Jonathan thought the giant was going to strike him. The chauffeur plainly was of the same mind, for he made an obvious movement to catch his master's arm.

But Sir Andrew never moved.

After a little while he took a deep breath.

"Did I call you a liar?" he said.

"You did," said Jonathan.

"Well, I daresay you are. The world's full of 'em. Still . . ."

It was a gruff ghost of an apology, yet the best Sir Andrew Plague had made for twenty years. It was not the man's fault that it was no better. His pride's neck had grown stiff. As though to correct the impression that it was at all flexible, he turned upon his chauffeur with a quick roar.

"Move, you fool, move. Don't stand there drivelling. Fill up, and send these thieves about their business." A mechanic in the Ford shifted uneasily, and his fellow let fall a can. "A-a-ah, you blundering felon. . . ." He swung on his heel and called to Jonathan. "Here."

The latter followed him, walking up the road.

"Never help anyone," said Sir Andrew. "If you do, you'll regret it. If I'd caught you assisting to steal my wheel, I'd 've broken your back: and if my chauffeur'd caught you, you'd 've got twelve months—if there's any law left in England. Never help anyone." He turned abruptly, to make his way back to the car. "Oh, and get rid of that dog," he added, over his shoulder.

Jonathan watched him stop to curse his chauffeur and shake a fist at the mechanics, before flinging open the door and heaving himself out of sight. He was sorry, to tell the truth, to see the last of him. . . .

He liked Sir Andrew Plague and admired him enormously. For such admiration, he must himself be admired. Worth knows worth in an instant, smother it how you will. That which the mechanics reluctantly respected, Jonathan found inspiring. Whensoever a deep calls, the shallows tremble, but only a deep will respond.

Jonathan saw in Plague a man born out of time. He saw a man made of the Conqueror's stuff, cast in the Norman mould, seized of that dukely 'drive,' in mind, as body, towering above his fellow-men—to his own hurt. He saw a giant stalking through pygmy-land, chafing for company and finding none—a giant whose lack of peers and vigorous mental fellowship had spoiled his temper, who had come to say in his haste, 'All men are fools.' Here was a lion, then—flaunting a lion's faults—cloaking a lion's virtues. All the time the lion's personality blazed. . . .

Jonathan's estimation was very sound.

Sir Andrew Plague's nickname was 'The King of Beasts.'

What Plague thought of Jonathan will presently appear. Suffice it that the deeps were in touch.

"Hi!"

The large, red face was protruding from the limousine's window.

Jonathan hurried to the car.

The engine was running, and the chauffeur was in his seat.

"What's your name?"

The man who had lost his memory started. Then he lifted his eyes and stared at the dust-laden trees.

"Wood," he said suddenly. "Wood. Jonathan Wood."

"Mine's Plague," said the other roughly. "Andrew Plague. Want any help any time, I'm in the book. But don't telephone. Filthy instrument. Where's that brute of a dog?"

Jonathan whistled, and Hamlet came running up.

Sir Andrew blew through his nose. Then—

"Does he eat sausage?" he asked.

"He will—gratefully."

"Ugly brute," said Sir Andrew. "Get rid of him." He turned to rave at his chauffeur. "Drive on, you fool, drive on. What the hell are you waiting for?" He flung himself back on the seat and closed his eyes.

The chauffeur let in the clutch. . . .

Before the car was fifty paces away, something white came fluttering out of the window.

Upon examination it proved to be a confectioner's paper bag containing a sausage-roll.

* * * * *

Tall, grave-faced Jonah Mansel, of White Ladies, Hampshire, could tell a good tale. That which he told to his cousins, some five days after Hamlet had eaten the sausage-roll, was no exception. I will, if you please, set out his very own words.

"I'd meant to lunch at Oxford, but by the time I'd got there it was a quarter to one, so I thought I'd better push on to Ruby Green. I found it easily enough. Nice little place, smacking of peace and plenty. Obviously old as the hills, and, happily, off the map. Stocks, pound, etc., and a church you could get inside a furniture-van. We must go there one day. . . . Well, I found out where the Justice Room was, and then I made for the inn.

"To tell you the truth, I'd expected a royal welcome. You know. Genial host, scurrying maids, foaming tankards, venison pasty, raspberries and cream—and the rest. The place suggested it. I was never more mistaken. I got no welcome at all. The goods were there all right, but they weren't delivered. I couldn't get any attention.

how they made things hum? Well, there you are. Porthos was in the parlour and the deuce of a rage. Only one or other of that Big Four could possibly have raised such Cain—and got away with it. The house was bewitched . . . terrorised. The one idea of every soul in that inn was to gratify 'his' desires the instant they were expressed—'lest a worse thing befall.' Did 'he' want cream, there was a rush for the dairy. Did 'he' want pepper, the boots was hounded to the grocer's. Did 'he' want ale, the bar was stormed. And as 'he' was never satisfied, it was a constant *Sauve qui peut*. All the time Porthos was bellowing like twenty bulls. The inn was no longer an inn, but Porthos' temple. All other custom went by the board. I could have eaten and drunk as much as I liked. As a



"Tall, good-looking chap: a bit on the thin side, and roughly dressed: obviously unfamiliar with docks and rather worried."

The host was—well, preoccupied and perspiring. The maids certainly scurried, but not for me. The tankard only foamed because I filled it myself. I actually had to force my way into the kitchen to get any food. . . . Anybody would have thought the devil was in the house. *As a matter of fact, he was.*

"D'you remember, when Dumas' Musketiers honoured a tavern in an ill humour,

matter of fact, I did—and put five bob in the till by way of payment. If I'd taken out ten, instead, it wouldn't have mattered. . . .

"Well, I was so much entertained—that's an unhappy expression, but you can guess what I mean—that I almost forgot about my summons. . . . Someone was yelling 'Maunsel' as I came in.

"'Here,' said I. . . .

"There was a full Bench—I couldn't think why. You know. The usual crowd: retired colonel, couple of grocers, lord o' the manor, a carpet-knight or two, and an earnest, throaty gent, wearing a pained expression and a black bow-tie.

"The Clerk had just asked me whether

table like a great sea-lion. Some wretched fellow's hat was on the chair he chose—a bowler hat. When Plague got up cursing, it looked more like a game. Plague just snorted and pitched it over his shoulder. . . . As for the Bench—well, Porthos had just changed temples. That was all.



" 'I appear for the defence,' says Plague thickly. 'And I plead "Not Guilty." Then he turned to his solicitor and jerked his head at the dock. 'Take his instructions,' he said."

I was guilty of exceeding the speed limit or not, and I'd just said 'No,' when there was what sounded like a first-class row outside the Court, and the next moment Porthos appeared—in the flesh.

"Sir Andrew Plague, K.C.! I knew him at once. Brought down specially to do some motor-car case . . . a point of law, of course. If those seven magistrates had known him by anything but name—well, the Bench wouldn't have been full.

"Of course everything stopped dead. And old Plague just flounced his way to the

"They got back to me at last.

"As if I was going to 'plead' to sixty-five! I told you I knew the police had bungled the thing.

"Well, I got up at once and asked that the witnesses might be out of Court. The Bench stared. My presumption amazed them: clearly they thought it bad form. They began to consider whether it would be decent to accede to my odious request.

" 'Put 'em out,' says Plague. 'You heard what he said. Put 'em out.'

"Those magistrates just collapsed. They

sat like seven stuck pigs, while a solitary constable elbowed his way to the door.

"By way of attempting to save the situation—

"'You ought to have been out of Court,' blustered the chairman.

"'No, he oughtn't,' snaps Plague. 'Read your Manual.'

"Well, the case against me went bust.

"The first policeman described my car; the second, some other fellow's. They gave different times. They lost their places in their notes. The Bench did their best to help them, but, when they saw it was hopeless, they lost their temper and tore the idiots up. I wasn't called upon.

"I could have gone, but I didn't. I had a stall for a show you can't pay to see. . . . It was worth waiting for.

"Some chap had left his car standing in the street, and had been summoned for obstruction. The A.A. had taken it up and briefed old Plague to go down and fight the case.

"My word, that man's a marvel. He never looked at a paper or made a note. When he was sitting down, his eyes were closed. But—when he got up. . . . It's difficult to explain, but there were certain answers he wanted—meant to have. It was perfectly obvious. You could see them coming. The witnesses could, too. They didn't want to give them, but they just had to. With it all, he was as quiet as a lamb—except once. The solicitor for the police interrupted.

"'Silence!' says Plague, in a voice of thunder.

"The Bench just quivered, and the wretched solicitor crumpled like a wisp of foil on a red-hot plate. . . .

"Presently he—Plague—got up to speak.

"I'd always heard that he hated a country Bench, but. . . . Talk about Contempt of Court. . . . I could hardly believe my ears. As for those magistrates', they must be burning now.

"'There's a Court up in London,' he said, 'called the Divisional Court. It's a pillory, where they set Country Justice by the ears. 'S often as not, I'm the hangman. I daresay you've been there before. You can go there now, if you like—and be hanged. I don't care. Or you can save your bacon. Understand this. You can convict—if you like: you can impose a fine—if you like: you can all sign the record, like so many sheep—if you like. But the conviction will be quashed: the fine will never be paid; the record will

have to be corrected—by so many sheep as signed it. I know what I'm talking about. You can't touch this man because the law's against you—good, sound law, laid down by men who are dead, the more's the pity. For what it's worth, I'll try to make plain what it says. . . .

"He gave them those cases with a spoon, as you feed a baby. I understood every word. You couldn't miss it.

"When he'd finished, he chucked the last book down.

"'And now,' he said, 'sit still, and continue to sit. Or go to the Court—and be hanged.'

"Yes, the summons was dismissed.

"Well, you might think that was enough for one afternoon. But not at all. The show was to come.

"You know the sort of upheaval that takes place in Court at the end of some *cause célèbre*? Well, that was in full blast. Everybody was either trying to get out, or passing somebody else, or changing his place: four of the justices were on their feet: a superintendent was leaning across the table talking to the Clerk: I was half-way to the door: Plague was demanding his hat, and a constable was yelling 'Silence!' In the middle of it all, a door was flung open, and some prisoner or other was hustled into the dock. As he stepped up, he looked round, and the moment I saw him I was certain I'd seen him before. Tall, good-looking chap: a bit on the thin side, and roughly dressed: obviously unfamiliar with docks and rather worried. Now, the dock was directly between me and where counsel had been sitting, and, as I was staring at his back, wondering what he was there for and where the deuce I'd seen the fellow before, I suddenly realised that I wasn't alone in my interest. *From the solicitors' table old Plague was gazing at that chap as if he'd seen an apparition.* His mouth was open, and he looked like a great red fish. . . .

"I heard the Clerk's voice.

"'. . . loitering upon enclosed premises, with intent to commit a felony. Are you guilty, or—'

"'I appear for the defence,' says Plague thickly. 'And I plead "Not guilty."' Then he turned to his solicitor and jerked his head at the dock. 'Take his instructions,' he said.

"The hush that fell upon that Court was supernatural.

"'Sensation' 's no use. I want a bigger word.

"Look at the ingredients of this amazing stew. First, Plague's terrific personality. Hang it, the man's only got to ask somebody to pass the salt, to create a sensation. Then the neurotic condition the Court was in—thanks to Plague's conduct of the last case: ready to scream if a cow lowed. Thirdly, the appearance in the dock of an obvious gentleman. Fourthly, Plague's sudden announcement that he proposed to defend a case of whose existence—much less details—until that moment he had manifestly never dreamed. . . . Plague. . . . Plague himself. . . . Sir Andrew Plague. . . .

"So soon as I'd recovered my wits, I just slid back to my old seat and sat down tight. It's as well I was quick about it, for everyone else in the building was seized with the same idea. The news must have spread like wildfire. Within one minute I'll swear you couldn't've got an umbrella inside that room.

"Well, Bench, police and Clerk were obviously swept off their feet. They weren't expecting this, and you can't blame them. The first thing they realised was that they must have time. They told one another so in hoarse, excited whispers—especially the superintendent. If perspiration's anything to go by, I fancy the wretched fellow felt that his hour was come. All the time the solicitor was coolly taking the prisoner's instructions, and Plague was sitting in his seat with his eyes closed.

"Presently the chairman leaned over and, wreathing his face into a winning smile, inquired if Plague wouldn't like an adjournment as he had 'only been so recently instructed.'

"'No,' says Plague, 'I wouldn't. Proceed with the case.'

"'Then,' says the chairman, 'we'll hear evidence of arrest.'

"'You'll hear the case,' says Plague.

"Evidence of arrest was given.

"By the time Plague had done with him, I'll bet that policeman cursed the hour he was born. The way he perspired was frightful.

"Then the superintendent got up, fairly streaming with sweat, and asked for a remand.

"'Why?' says Plague.

"'To make inquiries.'

"'What inquiries?'

"The superintendent boggled and said it was usual.

"Plague fairly let fly.

"'Usual?' he blazed. 'By gad, it's as

well I'm here. Usual to clap a gentleman in gaol for seven days while you rake over your dunghills to scratch up some lies against him?' He threw up his head and looked the Bench up and down. 'I demand,' he barked, 'to be told if that is the Prosecution's case. If it isn't, let them go on. If they can't, then it's closed.'

"The superintendent tried, stammering, to stick to his rotten guns. The Bench, who had always looked upon him as a sort of Rock of Ages, shivered and writhed. . . .

"'Enough,' says Plague. 'He presses for a remand. I say it's an iniquitous request. I'll address you on this point now.'

"'Loitering, *per se*, is no offence. We're all of us loitering here, the more fools we. It only becomes an offence when it is proved that he who is loitering is loitering with a definite, wicked object—that of stealing, or murdering, or committing some other felony. The police must satisfy you that the defendant was loitering in the flesh, with felony in his heart. They've not done the one, and they can't do the other. I'm assuming you're reasonable men with reasonable minds. I'm bound to. Now listen to me. . . .

"'*Loitering in the flesh.* The ball some children are using falls into a yard. They cry. The defendant climbs into the yard and restores them their ball. He goes on his way. Half an hour later he finds he has lost some money. He thinks it fell out of his pocket when he was scaling the wall. He returns to look for it. While he is looking, he's found—by the vigilant police. They ask and are told his business. *He is not believed.* I asked that ornament why. What did he say? *Because the defendant could not produce the money which he said he had lost, for which he was looking.*

"'There goes one half of the charge. Now for the other.

"'*With felony in his heart.* No evidence forthcoming: but if you will imprison the defendant for seven days, some might be procured. . . . I've every right to stamp this board-school argument underfoot, but I'm not going to. I'm going to pretend it needs a proper reply, and I'm going to blow it into atoms about as small as the greasy brains that conceived it. . . .

"'Which looks most like a felon—the accused or the fool who accused him? Or that ass of a superintendent, for the matter of that? Don't be afraid. I'm not going to go any further. But, if you're hard up for sense, for Heaven's sake use your eyes,

D'you think those finger-tips there are recorded at Scotland Yard? 'But,' whine the police, 'he gives no account of himself.' Why should he? He's not even trespassing. I'm half a lawyer—I take it you won't dispute that. And I say he's not even trespassing. Why should he give an account? Yet give an account he did—which is more than I would have done. He gave his name and he said he had no address. He told them where he was going and whence he had come. He said he was looking for work, and asked if they could tell him where hands were wanted. . . . But that pelting Jack-in-office won't be beat. He's out to find a worm—an evil worm. The more evil worms he finds, the better for him. He's looking so hard for worms that he never sees that the very soil he's sifting is fuller's earth. Probably he doesn't recognise the fuller's earth of honesty. But he knows a worm in a minute—an evil worm. Discretion doesn't count with him. Worms count. And evil worms count two. But you're not police, and that's where you come in. . . .

"If, in the face of these facts, you like to grant a remand, do so. But, so sure as you do, I'll post up to London, have a Judge out of his bed and a Writ of *Habeas Corpus* to-night. Please yourselves. I was at school with his father, the famous surgeon, and I'm not going to have my godson. . . .

"He let the sentence go and flung himself down in his seat.

"I thought those wretched Justices were going to faint. For a moment there was absolute silence. Then the earnest, throaty gent gave a gurgle of dismay. . . . With a superhuman effort, the chairman pulled himself together.

"Of course,' he stammered, with a frightful grin, 'I ne-need hardly say, Sir Andrew, that we had n-no idea——'

"Not the faintest,' whimpers another Justice.

"Plague waved them away.

"Dismiss the charge,' he says. 'Dismiss the charge.'

"Of course,' says the chairman, watching the superintendent being helped out of Court. 'The charge is dismissed, and—er——'

"Should never have been brought,' howls another Beak.

"Oh, shameful!' wails Throaty, raising his eyes to heaven.

"I trust, Sir Andrew,' mouths the chairman, 'I sincerely hope——'

"Where's my hat?' says Plague, and follows the late defendant out of Court. . . .

"Well, there you are.

"I found out the fellow's name—same as my own, curiously enough. 'Jonathan.' Surname, 'Wood.' And, after a lot of thinking, I remembered who he was like—that fellow Valerie French took such a toss over. But it obviously wasn't him. His name was 'Lyveden,' wasn't it? Besides, they found his body. . . . Yes, I remember."

* * * * *

The sweet o' the day had come in, and the village of Ruby Green was looking its best.

At noon the place had been superb—a beautiful, clear-cut study in black and brilliant white—a thing for strangers to photograph. Now that the sun was sinking, the clear-cut study was gone. The shadows were there still, but they were grey and blurred: the brilliancy had faded to a glow: the white had become rosy. The place was alive with tones no camera could ever catch. Always the village was lovely—a perfect sheet out of the folio of Time: but while at mid-day it had worn the lasting beauty of a rare old print, now at even it was a piece of exquisite tapestry—delicate, memorable. There was a peace, too, which had displaced its noontide sleepiness—a mellow, dulcet atmosphere of labour done. Sounds that had gone unnoticed during the business of the day stole into earshot: the steady rush of water over a sluice, the lisp of the wind in elm-tops, the distant drone of a thresher. . . .

Seated upon a bench outside *The Yew Tree*, Jonathan cared for these things with a full heart.

Sir Andrew Plague had given him three commands. The first was to find the man upon whose hat he had sat, and to pay him two pounds. The second, to go to the inn and get a square meal. The third, to await instructions.

The first two orders had been obeyed, and now he was waiting at ease till Porthos should have finished his tea. A dozen paces away, Hamlet, who had had enough of prison yards, was making horseplay with a retriever.

If Jonathan felt thankful, he also was greatly moved. This is not to be wondered at. He was upon the edge of great matters. The interview, the summons to which he was awaiting, must be momentous. Thereat, for better or for worse, he would learn his identity and his past. His future, too, would

in some sort be settled in that same small room where Plague—his godfather—was having tea . . . *his godfather* . . .

Not that he cared about his future. His past was the thing. 'His father, the famous surgeon. . . .

Jonathan began to wonder what he had done.

He had an uneasy feeling that he had done wrong. There was some mystery about him. If Sir Andrew had known him in Court, he had known him equally well that day by the side of the road. Yet he had never declared himself—would not have done so now, but to save his (Jonathan's) skin. That was as clear as daylight. Oh, indubitably he had erred—in some way. So much the nicer of Plague to have befriended him. But for his intervention. . . .

He wondered what Plague would say to his loss of memory. A thousand to one he'd call him 'a lying hound.' Still, he'd believe what he said.

Here his thoughts flew back—as far as they could. He remembered that terrible night when he had walked with Death. He thought of that morning, a short four days ago, when he had first discovered the virtue of his misfortune—perceived the excellence of his lot in all its glory. . . .

With a shock Jonathan realised that that very freedom from care, which he had found so precious, was about to be withdrawn. The thought of such subversive dispossession daunted him. For a second of time, indeed, he was minded to rise up and go. His state was blessed. Why, then, should he surrender it? He had no real desire to know the past. If such knowledge was to cost him his freedom from care. . . .

Jonathan started to his feet.

Then he sat down again and shook his head.

"No," he said, frowning. "No, I can't run away. I'm sorry it's come so soon, but I can't run away. Besides . . ."

Here the spruce little chauffeur appeared in the inn's doorway. . . .

Jonathan called Hamlet and put him under his arm.

A moment later he was ushered into the presence.

Stretched luxuriously upon two easy-chairs, Sir Andrew, cigar in hand, regarded the pair.

"Didn't I tell you," he said, "never to help anyone?"

"You did, sir."

"Then why the devil d'you do it?"

Jonathan shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose I forgot, sir."

"Don't lie to me," snapped the other. "You'd do it again to-morrow. You know you would. And next time I shan't be by, to pull you out of the fire. I wouldn't have done it to-day, if I'd thought twice. And turn that dog round. I don't like his ugly face."

Obediently Jonathan reversed the Sealyham.

"I should like to——"

"Ugh! He's still looking at me, the brute. Put him down, can't you?"

Placed upon the floor, Hamlet advanced upon Sir Andrew and, fixing his eyes upon him, sat up and begged.

The K.C. covered his face.

"I have to thank you, sir," said Jonathan, subduing a smile, "for a most handsome action. But for your generous——"

"That'll do. I enjoyed myself. Besides, I've a weakness for seeing justice done." He plucked a case from his pocket and pulled out some notes. "Here's twenty pounds. Don't go and drink it. If you aren't on your feet again by the time that's finished, you ought to be flogged."

Jonathan stared at the money with saucer eyes.

"Take it, you fool, take it. I'm not going to hold it all day."

Jonathan took the notes with trembling fingers.

"You're very kind, sir," he stammered.

"Of course I'll pay you back."

"As you please," jerked the other, and fell a-whistling. "Good-bye."

Jonathan could hardly believe his ears. The interview, which was to be so memorable, was at an end. His fortune had not been told. . . . It occurred to him in a flash that he must be a very black sheep—a family skeleton, in fact. Recalling Sir Andrew's charge, he began to wonder if liquor had been his downfall. . . .

For a moment he hesitated. Then he turned dully away.

Arrived at the door, he swung round.

"Tell me one thing," he said quietly.

"Who was my father?"

Sir Andrew stared at him.

"How the devil should I know?"

Jonathan put a hand to his head.

"But you were at school with him. You must have known him well to be my godfa——"

The other leapt to his feet, kicking over a chair.

"Is this blackmail?" he demanded.

"'Blackmail'?" echoed Jonathan.
 "Blackmail?"

"Because," said Sir Andrew, advancing,
 "because, if it is . . ."

The cold, deliberate tone was more terrible than any rage. The countenance had lost its grossness and become a grim mask. The keen grey eyes had narrowed to mere points of steel.

Jonathan felt as though he had crossed a king.

Then—

"I may be a waster," he said, "but I've not sunk so low as that." He threw the notes on the floor between the two of them. "I'm deep enough in your debt. I suppose I've given you cause to think this vile thing of me, though why, if I have, you didn't spare your talent this afternoon, I fail to see."

With that, he called the dog and turned again to the door.

"Stop!" Jonathan stood still. "Why on earth did you ask me your father's name?"

"Because you know it, and I do not."

"Why should I know it?"

Jonathan wheeled about.

"Two hours ago you stated in Court——"

Sir Andrew waved his arms.

"Lies, you fool. All lies." The other recoiled. "I had to say something to shake those Justices up. Up to that moment I hadn't a rag of a case."

Jonathan stared and stared. Then he leaned against the wall and began to laugh. . . .

After a long look at him, Sir Andrew returned to his chairs. Sitting down, he proceeded, snorting, to mop his face.

"There's something wrong with you," he burst out suddenly. "What is it?"

"This," said Jonathan weakly. "I've lost my memory."

He told his tale there and then. The eminent lawyer listened with closed eyes. When the recital was over—

"And what," he demanded, "do you propose to do?"

Jonathan shrugged his shoulders.

"Work," he said simply. "At least, I've one recommendation. I've got a clean sheet."

"You haven't a sheet at all," snapped Sir Andrew. "And that's what'll lay you low. That and your cursed folly of helping fools."

"If I'm believed when I say——"

"Would you believe such a tale?"

"I would," said Jonathan.

Sir Andrew let out a squeal, as though suddenly stung, and Hamlet, considerably startled, began to bark.

"I knew it," yelled Plague. "I knew it. In spite of all I've said, you'd help the liar that told it." He turned upon Hamlet with a roar. "Stop it, you venomous swine! Don't yap at me." He snatched *The Times* from the floor and flung himself back in his seat. "What of your friends?" he demanded.

"I don't even know if I have any, much less who they are."

"You can make inquiries."

"I think that's for them to do. They've something to go on. I haven't. Besides, I've got to live."

"In fact, you're content as you are?"

"Perfectly. The past has been taken from me. I don't want it back."

"You may be a millionaire."

Jonathan smiled.

"Felicitate me," he said, "upon my release."

A ghost of a grin stole into the great red face. . . .

Then, as though to obliterate the impression that he knew how to smile, the giant snorted like a wild beast and beat and wrung *The Times* into the shape he desired.

For a moment his eyes were scanning a column of print. Then—

"There's a fool's advertisement here," he announced, "for a secretary. I happen to know the fool. If you like to offer yourself, I'll get you the job."

Jonathan hesitated.

"D'you think I could give satisfaction? I don't want to let your friend down. You see, I've no idea of what I can do."

"Fools go with fools." Sir Andrew dabbed at the paragraph. "You'll suit him admirably." He nodded at pen and ink. "Write a reply now, and I'll take it to Town."

Jonathan did as he was bid.

*The Yew Tree,
 Ruby Green.*

August 5th.

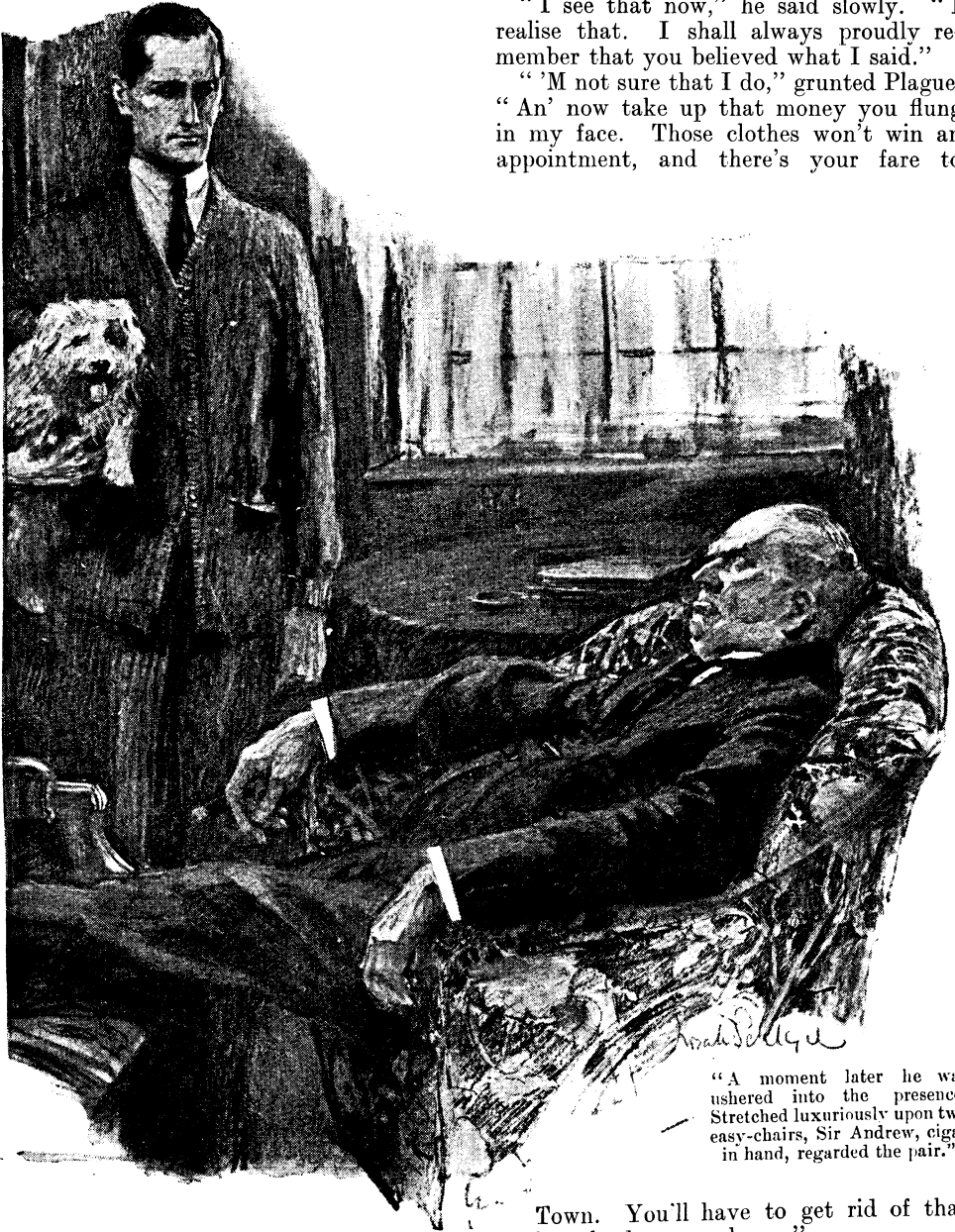
SIR,

In reply to your advertisement, appearing in to-day's issue of The Times, I beg to apply for the post you are seeking to fill.

An interview will better enable you to appraise such qualifications as I may have, so, if you entertain this application, will you be good enough to write to me c/o The

Poste Restante, Oxford, giving me an appointment?

*I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
JONATHAN WOOD.*



He addressed the letter to the Box, and, rising, humbly offered it to Plague for his inspection.

The latter read it carefully.

"You've told me a pretty tale," he said, without raising his eyes. "As I've tried to point out, not one in a million fools would ever believe you. A sudden loss of memory's too convenient."

Jonathan nodded.

"I see that now," he said slowly. "I realise that. I shall always proudly remember that you believed what I said."

"'M not sure that I do," grunted Plague. "An' now take up that money you flung in my face. Those clothes won't win an appointment, and there's your fare to

"A moment later he was ushered into the presence. Stretched luxuriously upon two easy-chairs, Sir Andrew, cigar in hand, regarded the pair."

Town. You'll have to get rid of that beastly dog, you know."

Jonathan started. A finger flew to his lip.

"Hamlet!" he breathed. "Hamlet! I quite forgot."

A touch made him look down. It was the terrier's 'Adsum.'

One paw raised, his soft brown eyes alight with eagerness, the dog was awaiting his bidding with a heart no wages can buy. As their eyes met, his tail began to move to and fro. Surely never squire so hung upon the lips of his lord. . . .

Jonathan stooped and patted the small rough head.

"Perhaps they 'ld let me keep him," he said lamely. "We're rather friends."

"You're mad," said Plague shortly. "The advertisement asks for a man, not a menagerie."

Jonathan straightened his back.

"I can't give him up," he said.

Sir Andrew Plague rose and clawed at the air.

"You blithering fool!" he roared. "It's the dog or the post."

"I choose the dog," said Jonathan quietly enough.

With a fearful effort, the other mastered his voice.

"So," he said hoarsely. "Vagabonds and rogues hang together. Well, I'll keep my word. I'll send your letter along. If you like to cut your own throat, that's your affair."

"I'm afraid you think me ungrateful."

"Never mind what I think," snarled Plague. "But learn of me. Never help anyone." He turned on his heel. "And now go," he added. "I'm tired of fools."

Jonathan went.

* * * * *

On the morning of August the eighth he was given a letter.

He thrust this into his pocket and left the Post Office. Crossing St. Aldate's, he passed into the meadows. . . .

Presently pacing that majestic nave—that peerless robing-room where youth, panting, barelegged and thoughtless, unconsciously puts on the magic mantle of Tradition to his own use for ever, Jonathan drew out the letter and turned it about meditatively.

Blithely Hamlet preceded him, going upon three legs—indisputable evidence of his approval of The Broad Walk. Abstractedly his master watched him. . . . After a little while he shook his head.

"I can't give him up," he said shortly. "It's out of the question."

With that, he ripped open the envelope.

45, Kensington Palace Gardens, W.

August 6th.

SIR,

We have had our interview.

I am satisfied that you are stubborn, sentimental, and credulous—three most abominable failings.

Upon the understanding that you will correct your behaviour in these respects, you may become my secretary at a salary of five hundred pounds a year.

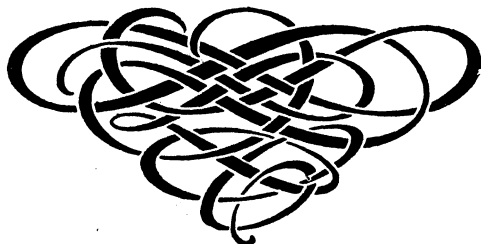
Yours faithfully,

ANDREW PLAGUE.

Jonathan Wood, Esq.

P.S.—Acknowledge this letter and be here in three days' time. I have told the steward that your dog will eat sausage-rolls. If this diet is wrong, you had better instruct him direct.

The third instalment of this story will appear in the next number.





"With great care she mixed small portions of the herbs, pounding them together in a mortar."

THE CHARM OF OBI

By GEOFFREY WILLIAMS

ILLUSTRATED BY J. R. SKELTON

"SO it is he, returned at last. Obi does not lie," muttered the red-eyed man. He shrank farther back into the shadow of the flowering shrub beneath which he crouched, and a cluster of scarlet blossoms hid the malevolent grin that bared his yellow teeth.

All ignorant of the savage eyes that watched him through the leaves, Captain Roger Beaton, trader, sea-rover, smuggler, swindler—various people called him all these things—strode up the pathway towards the welcoming lights of the Bridge-town Club, whistling cheerfully. He had

just returned from a fruitless search around the many islands of the West Indies for one Ezra Pereira, whom he ardently desired to meet for certain reasons. But he was a cheerful soul, and disappointment did not chase the smile from his clever grey eyes or the merry tune from his lips. Sooner or later he would find his man. He knew that. He always achieved those things upon which he had set his mind.

As he hoped, he found the Chief of the Police on the verandah, imbibing his usual sundowner, the one drink that no wise man misses in the tropics. As time went on,

Captain Roger began to find attractions in straight dealing, and to consider seriously the question of amending his ways. As a first step in this direction, he made the most of a friendly acquaintance with Major Partington that Fate had thrown in his way.

"Have you found him yet?" inquired the Major, smiling at Captain Roger.

"Not yet, though I've run all the islands through a toothcomb. But you've nothing particular to laugh about if you haven't found him, either. You've had a better chance than I."

"How do you make that out?" asked Partington. "Joseph, bring two more whiskies."

"Because I'm certain that Pereira has never left Barbadoes."

"Nonsense! How could he hide in an island this size? You can walk across it in a day."

"I'm absolutely sure that he hasn't landed at any of the others. I have my own ways of finding out these things, and they're safe. I'll bet my bottom dollar he hasn't cleared right off. He's out for revenge, and he won't go till he's had it."

Partington shook his head. "He could not possibly be here. Besides, it is three months now since he committed that murder, and tried to get Willie Ruddle hanged for it. Neither Willie nor his father has had any trouble since, and you may be sure he would have struck at them before now."

"No. He's got his knife into the Ruddles all right. But since I spoilt his game by saving Willie, you may be pretty sure it's me he's after. He wouldn't spoil his game by striking at the smaller fry first. He's been waiting for me to come back."

"It isn't possible. There is no way in which he could hide here," insisted Partington.

"Yes, there is. One, and only one. He must have Obeah behind him."

"Stuff!" laughed the policeman, stretching out his long legs. "Really, Captain Roger, I thought you had more sense. The Obeah superstition has been a back number for years."

"Has it? I could tell you things about Obeah in the last five years that would make your innocent eyes open so wide you'd never get 'em shut again. It's just like you officials to think that if you ignore the existence of a thing it couldn't presume to be there. I tell you that if Pereira has got the help of Obi, there isn't a single man

in this island with a dash of colour in him who would dare to raise a finger to give him away, or to refuse help if he asked for it. I made a little use of Obeah in the matter of Willie Ruddle, and I found out then that Pereira was mixed up with it."

"Sorry, but I have more faith in my detectives than you seem to have. All sailors love a superstition. If you can find Pereira by the help of Obi, I'll apologise, and stand you the best dinner the club can produce into the bargain."

Captain Roger grinned. "Excellent! I'll send you a menu of the things I like best. A good dinner is another thing all sailors love. But keep your blessed detectives off my track, Major. I don't want them sniffing round and giving the whole show away. When I want police help, I'll ask for it. Now it's time I was off. It's getting dark, and I've a lot to do. I've wasted enough time over this business as it is. There are one or two good deals waiting for my attention, and I want to get on with 'em."

"I hope those little deals won't call for the attention of my detectives, either. No offence, Captain Beaton. You and I understand each other pretty well, I think. Let me know how you get on."

Captain Roger waved a cheerful good-bye from the verandah steps, and passed out into the dusk of the garden. Night had fallen with tropic suddenness, and heavy clouds veiled the stars. The luxuriant shrubs loomed vague and ghostly on either side the path. As he turned a corner, shutting off the companionable gleam of the club lights, a faint rustle among the leaves caught his attention. Without waiting to look round, he sprang lightly to one side. At the same instant a knife struck him from behind, tearing a rent in his left coat-sleeve from shoulder to elbow, and scoring a long, though shallow, gash through the flesh. Captain Roger whipped round, revolver ready in his other hand. But his assailant was gone. He came like a flash, and like a flash he went. A momentary vision of a small brown figure, and the swishing of the branches as it fled, was all that told of his presence.

Captain Roger's finger trembled on the trigger. But he did not shoot. Slowly he lowered the revolver, and gravely contemplated the blood dripping from his arm to the gravel.

"Couldn't be sure of getting him," he muttered, "and if I had fired, Partington must have known all about it. I don't want

him and his blighted snuff-and-butter detectives fussing round and advertising all I do. That was Pereira right enough. There isn't anyone else here that I know of who is as keen as all that on wiping me out. Since I've got off with a scratch, it's just as well it happened. Puts an end to all doubt, anyway. Think I'd better go and see Aunt Miranda at once."

He tied a handkerchief roughly round his arm and, passing through the garden gate, walked off swiftly to the left towards the outskirts of the town.

To the uninitiated Aunt Miranda was an elderly, stout black woman of irreproachable character, and a regular attendant at chapel. Others, however, knew her to be much more than that—a fetich woman, one to whom Obi, that mysterious Power that dwells in the forest and cavern, had delegated some of his dreadful knowledge. Many came secretly and by night to Aunt Miranda's tumbledown little shack by the sands—lovers whose love was not returned, men desirous of revenge upon an enemy, women troubled about an unfaithful husband—and Aunt Miranda would supply them with the wherewithal to bring about their hearts' desire. She herself wished no ill to any man, but those upon whom the power of Obi had descended might not lightly turn a petitioner empty away.

Her knowledge was not all evil. She was learned in medicines and the healing strength of herbs, and many came to her suffering from wounds and sickness. These also she sent away content.

As Captain Roger drew near her house on the open country by the shore, he looked narrowly round him to make sure that he was not followed. Pereira would have others working for him, and might well set spies about his enemy's path. But there was no sign of anyone. Satisfied at last, Captain Roger slipped across a patch of open ground and tapped at Aunt Miranda's apology for a door.

A small native child appeared at the summons, and Captain Roger passed through into the darkness of the house. Aunt Miranda seemed to like the shadows; there was rarely a light to be seen beneath her roof. The room that he entered was empty—he could see that much—yet a moment later he heard her low, whispering voice close beside him. Though a big woman, and stout, she moved as softly as a cat. He had often had the same experience before, but never failed to feel a sensation

of uneasiness at the uncanny way in which she moved from place to place.

"Why does master come to see me to-night?" she inquired.

Captain Roger hesitated, doubtful as to the best way of coming to the point, and she went on: "But I see. He has a wound, and he knows dat Aunt Mirandy's medicines are good. You are always in trouble, always fighting, master. Not good to go on so. Time you marry nice little girl, and dance baby on your knee. You come to me, and I gib you medicine dat make any girl you want lub you, master. No trouble at all."

"Thanks," replied Captain Roger tersely. "I can do my own marrying. But I'd be glad if you would bandage up my arm. I know you're good at that, anyhow."

The old lady laughed softly. "My lub drink bery good t'ing. Some day, perhaps, when little girl frown, you t'ink differently. Sit down, master." She led him to a dilapidated chair in one corner, and glided silently out, to return with a lighted candle in a bottle, which she set on a table at his side.

Then for a while she busied herself with water and bandages. He sat in silence while she dressed the wound, arranged his big red handkerchief as a sling, and finally, when all was ready, produced a needle and cotton, and set herself to mend the rent in his sleeve. With the advent of the light her uncanniness had departed, and she was merely a kindly, motherly old black woman, anxious to do everything to oblige.

"Who been trying to kill master?" she asked presently.

"An old friend of yours. At least, I think he's a friend, for you seemed to know a lot about him last time I came to see you. Seems to me you keep very bad company, Aunt Miranda."

She nodded. "All folks come to see me—good, middlin,' an' bad. Some bery bad. One man I know not liking master at all. Little man wit' red eyes an' yellow teet'. I gib you somet'ing of his once. T'ink he kill Aunt Mirandy if he eber find out about dat."

"That's the man. I expected you'd know. First thing I want you to tell me is this: where is he hiding?"

A frightened look crept into her big black eyes, and she dropped her needle. "Master must not ask me. I dare not tell."

She glanced nervously over her shoulder as if she feared to be overheard.

"You mean that he's under the protection of Obi? I thought as much. I just wanted to make sure."

"Be careful, master," she whispered. "Not good to talk much about Obi here."

don't want to bring trouble on you, but, on the other hand, I'm not going to let that red-eyed devil Pereira get the better of me. And with—er—what we know of—behind him, he will, if you don't help."



"Captain Roger groaned again, and writhed in his chair till the strong wood cracked."

"Now, look here, Aunt Miranda," said Captain Roger, in a low voice, but with much emphasis, "I did a lot for you once in the past, and you've helped me once or twice, I know, in return. But the debt isn't wiped off yet, and you must help me once more. And if you won't do it for that, you must do it for friendship, because I'm in a very tight place, Aunt Miranda, a very, very tight place, and only you can get me out of it. I

She shook her head ponderously. "Bery bad man. I never see anot'er like him."

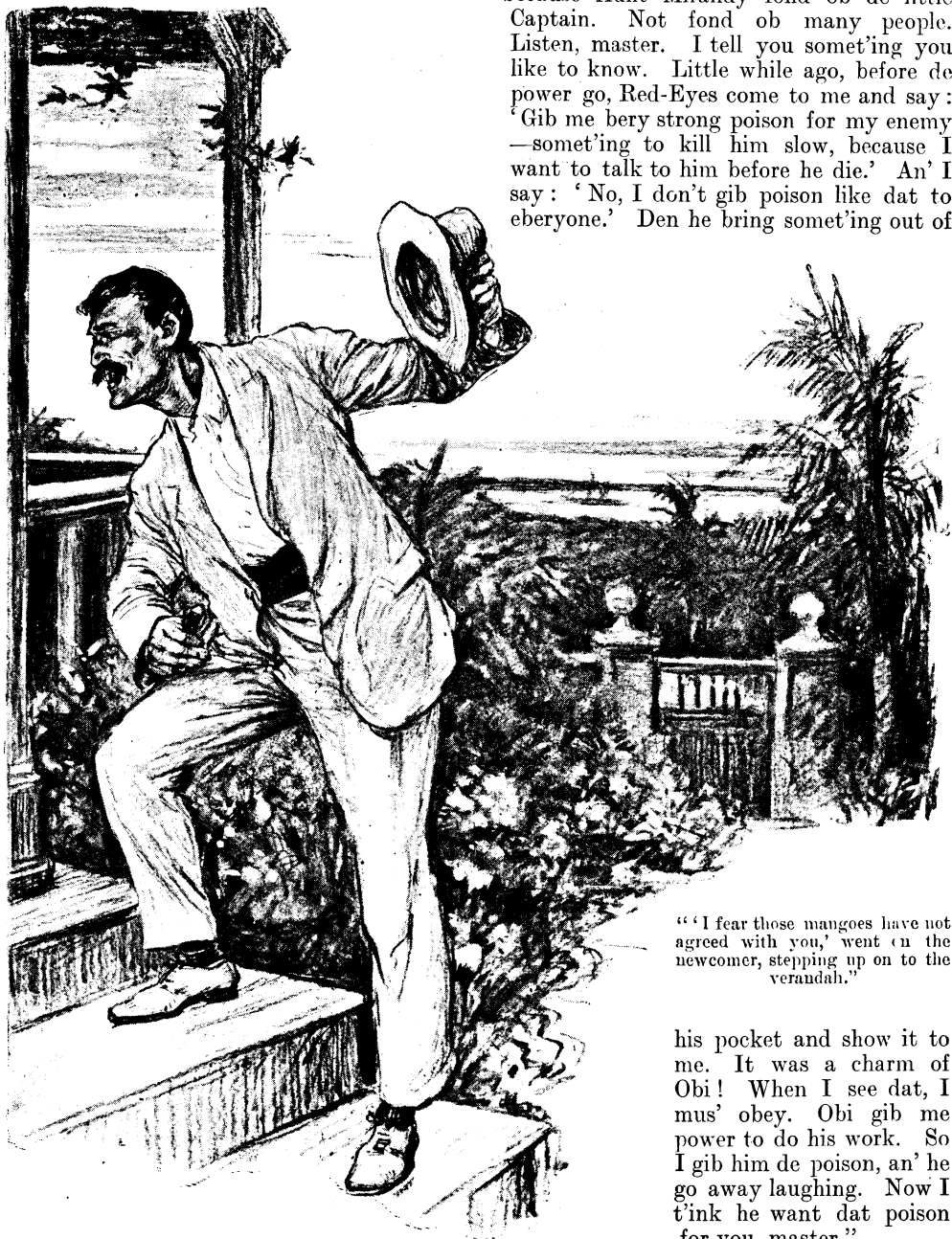
"This time he tried steel. Next time it will be something else, something I can't see or fight against, unless I get a warning and know what to look for. You are a fetich woman, and have power. You can do much."

The old woman spread out her hands

deprecatingly and groaned. "I no longer fetich woman," she whispered, in her queer voice like the sighing of a breeze. "The power has gone. You know, master, dat power does not stay for always. One day it

bad. Then can't you do anything at all?"

"Still, I know some t'ings—not many, but p'raps enough. Bery dangerous for me, but I help you if I can. Why? Oh, because Aunt Mirandy fond ob de little Captain. Not fond ob many people. Listen, master. I tell you somet'ing you like to know. Little while ago, before de power go, Red-Eyes come to me and say: 'Gib me bery strong poison for my enemy—somet'ing to kill him slow, because I want to talk to him before he die.' An' I say: 'No, I don't gib poison like dat to eberyone.' Den he bring somet'ing out of



"'I fear those mangoes have not agreed with you,' went on the newcomer, stepping up on to the verandah."

his pocket and show it to me. It was a charm of Obi! When I see dat, I mus' obey. Obi gib me power to do his work. So I gib him de poison, an' he go away laughing. Now I t'ink he want dat poison for you, master."

go quite sudden. An' Obi neber gib power to same woman twice."

Captain Roger whistled softly. "That's

"Yes," said Captain Roger thoughtfully. "No doubt he did. I suppose, when he found a chance of sticking a knife into me,

he couldn't resist it. How will he give me this poison, Aunt Miranda?"

"De best way is to put it in fruit, so I tell him. But dere are ot'er ways, too. I t'ink he will try de fruit first, an' if master not eat it, he will try somet'ing else."

"I see. And of course every black man in Barbadoes will do as he tells them, so that I can't trust anybody."

"Yes, if he show de charm. Eberyone know de Obi charm, an' obey when he see it."

"Hum!" muttered Captain Roger. "I don't see my way out of this, yet run away from Pereira I won't. And it's no earthly use putting Partington on to it. Why, even his own detectives wouldn't arrest a man who carried the Obi charm!"

The old lady chuckled. "Aunt Mirandy no longer fetich woman, but not quite finish' yet. I still know a lot ob t'ings." She went to a cupboard on the wall and brought out some bunches of dried herbs and various small bottles. With great care she mixed small portions of the herbs, pounding them together in a mortar. Then she added to the mess from the bottles now a few drops of liquid, now a little powder. And all the while she mumbled, in a language strange to Captain Roger, something that seemed to be a kind of invocation.

When all was finished, she made up two large pills and put them carefully into a tiny metal box, which she handed to him with instructions to keep it always on him, ready for use. Then she stowed away her drugs and locked up the cupboard.

"De power has gone," she remarked, "but I still know about de poisons an' de medicines. Dat remain when all else go. Be careful about what you eat, master. But if, one half-hour after eating, you feel a pain in your head here"—and she tapped her temple—"a pain like as if someone stick a sharp needle into de skin, swallow dese two pills. Dey save you for dat time. But when de red-eyed man find he fail, he try again wit' somet'ing else. An' perhaps he go next time to Mammy Lucindy, bery great fetich woman who lib ober by Cod'ington. Den I not able to do anyt'ing."

"How does this poison work?" he inquired. "What would happen if I didn't take your pills?"

"First you feel dat sharp pain in de head. Den you begin to die from de feet slowly up, till de heart die, an' all ober. An' it feel jus' like burning in de fire an' not able to speak. Bery bad poison ob Obi, dat."

Captain Roger sat for some time with his head on his hand, thinking over all that he had heard, his forehead puckered up and his steady grey eyes very grave. From time to time he tugged at his short, black beard, a habit of his when in doubt. Then he looked up suddenly and laughed.

"Thanks very much, Aunt Miranda," he said. "I think I see my way now. This gives me one chance against Pereira, and if I don't make the most of it, I deserve to be poisoned. You are quite certain that those pills of yours are all right? I don't want to die by inches because you have made some little mistake in the mixing."

"All good fresh drug," answered Aunt Miranda, with conviction. "Quite safe if you take pill directly you feel pain in head. Bite de pill as you swallow him. Den he act quick."

"That's all right. Then I'll be off. Good night." And after shaking hands with the old lady, and depositing a handsome fee on the rickety table, Captain Roger departed into the night.

Next day he let it be known that he required a servant, making sure that the news was well spread abroad. A few hours later, as he expected, a tall black arrived with the inevitable Barbadian grin and a sheaf of such admirable characters that no one could possibly refrain from engaging him at once. The necessary arrangements were quickly made, and as his new servant went off to get his bundle, Captain Roger watched his back with a curious expression.

"The game begins," he remarked to the world at large.

He lived, as a rule, on his ship, *The Merry Andrew*, but on this occasion he rented a small cottage, surrounded by a large garden, the owner of which was taking a few weeks' leave to one of the other islands. He moved into it at once, taking with him his white cook, Peter Hoskins, from the ship, and the new servant, Alfred. His quondam enemy and now firm friend, Amos Ruddle, had urged him to come to his plantation. But Captain Roger was firm, and adhered to his arrangements.

"There's more going on than you think, Amos," he declared, "and I'll play this hand alone and in my own way. I don't want to drag you into it. Pereira will leave you alone until he's had it out with nie, and I can beat him best if I don't have other people fussing round and getting in the way. Neither you nor Willie is to come near the cottage unless I give you the word. And

it's no use asking questions, because I'm not going to tell you anything."

For about a week he occupied himself rather ostentatiously in searching for one Ezra Pereira, who, he explained in confidence to several people at dinner in the cottage, he felt sure was hiding somewhere in the island. Captain Roger was a hospitable man, and fond of entertaining, and Alfred was a good waiter and expert at mixing cocktails. At the end of that time Captain Roger expressed himself as tiring of the search. Other business called him, he said to Major Partington, while Alfred mixed drinks at the sideboard, and in two days he would be off. Life on shore didn't suit him, anyway.

In the morning he took an opportunity of giving certain private instructions to Peter Hoskins, and a little later, at breakfast, he called that worthy in and, while Alfred poured out tea, added to them.

"I sail to-morrow, Peter," he said, "and I'm dining out to-night. So you can go off to the ship directly after lunch and take your things with you. I expect I'll come aboard late to-night, so tell Harding to have a boat waiting for me."

Peter pulled his hair, grinned, and retired, while Captain Roger finished his breakfast with a good appetite and a mind apparently at ease. The weather was very hot, really too hot to eat very much, and he lived principally upon fruit, especially during the heat of the day. He was much pleased when, after his siesta, Alfred arrived with a small basket of especially fine mangoes and a message that Major Partington had sent them as a farewell gift from his best tree.

"I'll have some of them with my sundowner, before I go out to dinner," he said. "Bring 'em in then, Alfred."

He spent the afternoon on Amos Ruddle's plantation, admiring various improvements in the machinery of the sugar refinery, and making, curiously enough, no reference whatever to his intention of departing next day. From his conversation it would appear that he had no intention of going anywhere. When evening came on, he walked homewards along the shore, and whistled merrily the while. His thoughts seemed to please him. The sun went down swiftly, and the air grew cooler. The swash of the waves on the sand and the hum of the awakening insects were soothing. So was the light breeze rustling the long, stiff fronds of the cabbage palms. A whiff of sweetness from the waxy blossoms of the

frangipani met him as he entered his garden gate, and the drooping pink tresses of the coralita brushed his shoulder. Long shadows began to creep stealthily among the bushes, and a great golden beetle blundered booming along the pathway.

"Pleasant place," murmured Captain Roger, and stepped jauntily on to his verandah.

On the little table by his big Bombay chair stood a tray of drinks, and beside it a plate of exceptionally fine mangoes. He slipped his hand into his pocket, pulled out the little metal box, opened it to make sure that all was right, and then called for Alfred.

"Mix me a green bitters," he ordered, as the tall fellow arrived from the back of the cottage, carrying a bowl of crushed ice, and looking an ideal servant in his immaculate white drill suit.

Alfred busied himself with the bottles and the ice, while Captain Roger lazily selected the finest mango. He ate it slowly, and with obvious enjoyment. Then he took the glass, and sipped at the foaming clear green liquid. He was perfectly calm and quiet, but one who knew him well might have noticed that his steady grey eyes were bright with inward excitement.

Alfred glanced at him as he selected another mango, then took up the bowl of ice and retired silently.

Captain Roger looked at the watch on his wrist. Then he leaned back in his chair, replacing the second mango in its dish.

"No need to overdo the thing," he muttered. "I dare say Aunt Miranda's medicine is strong enough to do the job, but we won't take any unnecessary risks."

He sat quite still, watching the shadows lengthen across the garden. The wind dropped to a dead calm, and the leaves of the palms by the fence ceased to rustle. Presently a rat ran out of the bushes and sat up on the path. It stared at him with its bright, beady eyes, then, seeing that he did not move, began to clean its whiskers unconcernedly. He watched it idly.

Suddenly something seemed to startle it. It dropped forward and ran back into the bushes, but towards him.

"Ah!" murmured Captain Roger. "But he walks silently. I heard nothing."

He looked again at his watch, then put his hand sharply to his head as if it hurt him.

"Time!" he said, and pulled out the little metal box. Keeping it carefully

concealed behind his knee in case he might be watched, he took out the two pellets, slipped them into his mouth, crunched, and swallowed them. Then his face broke into a wry smile. "If Aunt Miranda's a liar," he murmured again, "I am in for a bad time. But I fancy she's all right. I expect the pain ought to have begun by now. Ah, I thought so!"

There was a rustle in the bushes, and someone stepped out on to the path—a little man, dingily clad, with a sharp, thin face and red, ferret eyes that gleamed fiercely in the dusk. They were fixed on Captain Roger, whose face had become twisted and distorted as if he were in great pain. He came forward a step or two and peered anxiously. Then his thin lips parted and showed his broken, yellow teeth in a savage grin.

"You seem in pain, Captain Beaton," he remarked cheerfully. "I wished to talk to you, but you hardly seem equal to it."

Captain Roger groaned, strove to speak, but apparently could not.

"I fear those mangoes have not agreed with you," went on the newcomer, stepping up on to the verandah. "I thought it was possible that they would not. You see, you have presumed to thwart my plans once or twice, and it is never wise for anyone to do that. You have given me quite a lot of trouble. But I think it is all settled and paid for now."

Captain Roger groaned again, and writhed in his chair till the strong wood cracked. Pereira came a little nearer.

"Such a pity the medicine will not let you speak. I expect there is quite a lot that you would like to say. You would like to

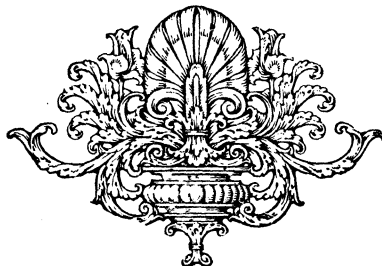
call for help, too, I dare say. But it wouldn't be any use, you know. Too late. I am glad I missed you with that knife. This is a much better way, and takes longer."

He was standing just over the chair now, gloating over the pain-distorted face and drinking in the sweetness of his revenge. Captain Roger's eyes flashed from the vicious little figure to the path, where something moved in the shadow behind Pereira's back. With a sudden effort he thrust the chair backwards with his feet, and sprang up. Pereira recoiled, his mouth dropping open in horrified surprise, just as a hard fist caught him full on the jaw. He fell with a crash, full length along the verandah boards.

From an open window Alfred leaped out, armed with something that glittered, only to meet the sturdy figure of Peter Hoskins, the cook, who had returned secretly and silently, according to orders. Alfred glanced at the fallen Pereira, then sprang to one side and vanished over the verandah rails into the darkness of the garden.

Captain Roger bent over his enemy and felt carefully in all his pockets. In one he found a small piece of black wood, carved like a fish. It was attached to Pereira's belt by a light steel chain. He unfastened it and buckled it on to his own belt.

"All's well," he said, with much satisfaction, "and nothing remains now but to hand this fellow over to Partington, and then to enjoy a thoroughly good dinner at that excellent official's expense. Still, I think I'll keep the charm of Obi. It may turn in useful one of these days. One never knows."





IF LONDON STARS CAME FALLING DOWN

IF London stars came falling down,
I'd set one in a silver crown
And place it on your hair;
And wheresoe'er you went o' nights
You'd have sweet wisdoms and delights,
A heart as light as air.



If London stars were falling yet,
I'd catch one in a silver net
And give it you to keep;
And you should have the quaintest dreams,
Strange sights and lights and fairy gleams,
Whene'er you went to sleep.



If London stars were falling fast,
I'd set one in your ear at last,
So delicate and small;
And always, though with wandering feet,
You'd hear the heart of London beat,
And love it best of all.

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.



"If to be consumed with interest in a lady is to be ill."

THE MYSTERIOUS MONSIEUR LARIVIÈRE

By C. KENNETT BURROW

ILLUSTRATED BY EMILE VERPILLEUX.

MADAME BLANCHEFLEUR laid down the book she had been reading and glanced out of the window. A flutter of falling leaves rustled faintly against the panes, and a breath of wind, that was too faint for a sigh, stirred in the copper beech. She rose and took half a dozen turns about the room, with a finger at her lips.

"Yes," she said to herself, "it is autumn, but what of that? Some day, perhaps, I shall be afraid of autumn, but now . . ."

She sat down at the piano, struck a few single notes and two or three simple chords, and then, still speaking to herself—but now she heard her own voice—she said :

"I shall make a song about that on some grey evening."

She rose and paced the room again, now and then touching objects with caressing fingers as she passed—a little Chinese grotesque in carved jade, a tiny ivory figure of a Breton peasant (wonderfully true in spite of the incongruous material) by Pascarelle. It was as though she were renewing an old association with once familiar things or bidding them a reluctant farewell. There are moments when the intimacy of the inanimate seems essential for human needs. The soul of the craftsman lives in all his work, though the brain that conceived and the hand that fashioned

may be dust of the Campagna or lost in the ooze of Nile.

Something like this, no doubt, was floating about Madame Blanchefleur's mind as she made that little tour of the room—that, and a great deal more. She was on the brink of an expectancy which might, at her will, become realisation. Why did she delay? Had she some ineradicable perversity of temperament which held her in bondage? Yet she assured herself that in her heart, and in the profounder deeps to which the heart is but a moon, she had no hesitation.

The door opened quietly and Dr. Sylvestre Bourdon was announced.

"My good Sylvestre," she said, as he entered, "perhaps I was thinking about you, but I am not sure. . . . The chair facing the window, then I shall have the light on you. You look tired."

"That is nothing," he said, smiling. "It is good to be tired."

"Even of waiting?" She stood for a moment looking down at him, and he met her gaze with that restrained fervour which always compelled her admiration because, though it claimed nothing, it never failed in complete confidence.

"It depends," he said, "on what one is waiting for. As I have told you, Natalie——"

"Yes, yes," she said, drawing her fingers caressingly across his shoulder. "I know your patience. That should be one of the qualities of a great physician, should it not?"

"Great physicians are also men," he said.

"And therefore, when they are tired, need to be consoled by women? Shall I play for you, or sing?"

"No," said Sylvestre, "I would rather hear you talk. Or, still better, sit down, say nothing, and let me look at you. . . . But, before I am lost in contemplation, I must deliver to you a message from Arnaud Dorain."

"You have seen him to-day?" Madame Blanchefleur asked.

"I have just left him."

"He is better?"

"Almost well," said the doctor. "His spirit burns with all the brightness of youth, but the vessel that keeps it visible for us is frail."

"Age, age!" cried Madame Blanchefleur. "It is an indignity, a desecration! When I think of growing old. . . ." She

glanced towards the window and the falling leaves. "But what message has the master sent me?"

"Here it is," said Sylvestre, and he handed to her a folded slip of paper. She opened it, and read, in a hand perfectly legible but uncertain in the upward curves of the letters, the words:

"Remember, my child, that a decision may be too long delayed. Strength of purpose may fail; thought may cloud issues as well as make them clear. Therefore do not think too much. Am I sententious? Very well, I will add: trust yourself as a woman. Our good doctor permits me to leave Paris in a day or two. I will see you when I return."

For a time Madame Blanchefleur sat quite still, turning Dorain's note between her fingers. Then she said:

"Do you know, Sylvestre, what the master has written here?"

"No. I was merely his messenger."

"He knew that you were coming here before he wrote?"

"Certainly, otherwise he would not have sent me a couple of miles out of my way. But why these questions?"

"I have, as you know, an immense curiosity," said Madame Blanchefleur. "Would you care to read what he says?"

"As you will," said Bourdon.

"That is no answer. Suppose it concerns yourself?"

"In that case, of course——"

The sentence was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Hélène Remuet, who darted into the room, bringing with her a flutter of drapery and a flash of colour that suggested an excited bird.

"A thousand pardons," she said, embracing Madame Blanchefleur, "if I arrive at the wrong moment. I rushed past Georgette without inquiring if you were alone." She turned to Dr. Bourdon, who had risen and was watching her with an amused expression in which there was, perhaps, a slight trace of irritation. "My dear doctor, can you forgive me?"

"I find it difficult," he said.

"You should understand," said Madame Blanchefleur, "that Dr. Bourdon is accustomed to decorum."

"Heavens!" cried Hélène, with a gesture of despair. "What have I done? Natalie, I will go at once."

"You will do nothing so absurd," said Madame Blanchefleur. "Sit down and try to compose yourself. And you will

observe—I beg you particularly to observe—that I hand to Dr. Bourdon this note, which I have just received from Arnaud Dorain. And you will further observe that Dr. Bourdon does not choose to read it at this moment. He places it in his pocket-book. Good!”

“Is this some plot between you two?” Hélène demanded.

“No, it is quite simple,” said Madame Blanchefleur.

“Absolutely,” said Sylvestre.

Hélène looked from one to the other, and shook her head.

“I permit myself to doubt the simplicity of both of you,” she said. “It looks to me as though this scene had been rehearsed.”

“For whose benefit, then?” Madame Blanchefleur asked.

“I give it up,” said Hélène.

“That, my child, is wise. . . . And now that you have recovered a little, what is the reason for this tempestuous visit?”

“I have heard from Jacques.”

“There is nothing surprising in that,” said Madame Blanchefleur. “If I know anything about Jacques Coriot, you hear from him every day.”

“Almost,” Hélène admitted, with a glance at Sylvestre. “If he did not write. . . . However, in this particular letter there is a message for you.”

“This seems to be a day of messages,” said Madame Blanchefleur.

“I am to tell you,” said Hélène, “that Torquillon is the loveliest spot in the world, that you would adore it, and that Jacques has discovered there a patron of art who is also a mystery.”

“Jacques is always making wonderful discoveries,” said Madame Blanchefleur.

“That is true,” Hélène said, “but this is profitable, and that, you will admit, is unusual. The point, however, is this.” She took a substantial letter from a wrist-bag scarcely large enough to contain it, and turned over the pages. “He says: ‘Here is an opportunity for our incomparable friend, Madame Blanchefleur. In Torquillon she would find for the eye, beauty; for the body, repose; for the imagination, a mysterious personality to study. Roland Larivière baffles me. The Hôtel du Cerf, I may add, is another discovery. It is unique.’ There,” Hélène concluded, “I have delivered Jacques’ message. All that remains, Natalie, is for you to capture Torquillon and solve the mystery of M. Larivière.”

Madame Blanchefleur glanced towards the

window again. Still a few leaves swirled softly down. Soon, she reflected, autumn would pass, the year would fade, time would maintain its remorseless rhythm, individual life would be carried a little nearer to the unheeding universality of death. Yet now the aspects of inevitable change did not oppress her spirit as when, not long before, she had cried out against the indignity of age. She even felt a kind of exultation in human limitations. Sylvestre Bourdon read this change of mood in a face that was, as it were, a mirror of emotion, and wondered whether Dorain’s note had anything to do with it. Their eyes met in a steady gaze.

“Sylvestre, you who are my good physician,” she said, “what do you say to this interesting suggestion of Jacques Coriot? Am I to attempt one more—adventure, shall I say?”

“Only one more?” he asked.

“There may possibly be another,” she said.

“A serious one?”

“Profoundly serious.”

“As your physician,” he said, rising, “I see no objection to this expedition to Torquillon. But do not remain there too long. As for the mystery of M. Larivière—well, that will probably prove to be no mystery at all.”

“Why do you say that?” Madame Blanchefleur asked.

“Not, be sure, to discourage you. I have, as you know, the most complete faith in Madame Blanchefleur’s capacity to make people reveal themselves.”

“She does it by revealing herself,” Hélène said.

“I am not so sure of that,” said Sylvestre, as he held Madame Blanchefleur’s hands for a moment. She answered him with a smile that certainly revealed something—enough, at any rate, to quicken his pulse and banish all sense of weariness.

“When do you propose to start?” Hélène asked.

“In an hour, say. I can be in Torquillon before dark.”

“You lose no time, Natalie.”

“In minor matters,” said Sylvestre, “Madame Blanchefleur makes astonishingly quick decisions.” Again she smiled at him and nodded.

“Shall I, or will you, wire to Jacques?” Hélène asked.

“It will be more entertaining to take him by surprise.”

When her visitors had departed, Madame Blanchefleur rang up the garage where the blue-and-white automobile reposed, and then proceeded to pack, not without regard to the possible effect of clothes upon M. Roland Larivière. But she did not give much thought to that unknown individual, who might turn out to be entirely commonplace; her mind was mainly occupied by Dorain's note and the messenger who had brought it. If Hélène had not arrived, if Sylvestre had read the note when they were alone together . . . And why, she asked herself, had she jumped at the idea of this fantastic expedition to Torquillon? She could find no clear answer; and as she closed the lid of the travelling basket, she became angry with herself and almost inclined to abandon the adventure.

But she did not abandon it. A couple of hours later she was spinning along the valley of the Eure, within ten miles of Chartres; somewhere thereabouts should be Torquillon. The light still lingered, but a vague mist gave a sense of obscurity, and the air was damp and sullen—an air that had in it the clutch of departing autumn.

A car overtook Madame Blanchefleur's, and as it slowed down to pass in the narrow road she called out:

"Monsieur, can you direct me to Torquillon?"

"I am for Torquillon." The voice emerged from a pile of furs, and immediately afterwards a face also emerged—a heavy, bearded face, in which glowed a pair of most inquisitorial eyes.

"Then, monsieur, if you will lead, I will follow. I wish to find the Hôtel du Cerf."

"That is my destination also." There was a note of surprise in the speaker's tone, and Madame Blanchefleur was conscious that she and her car were being subjected to as close a scrutiny as the twilight would permit. Then her interlocutor said to his chauffeur, in a booming voice that suggested the repercussion of a drum, "Advance slowly, Alexandre," and subsided into his furs. What was there in Torquillon, Madame Blanchefleur wondered, to attract this opulent-looking personage? And would there be room for both of them in the Hôtel du Cerf?

Turning to the left, the guiding car climbed a by-road which presently entered what appeared to be a considerable stretch of woodland. Here night seemed to fall suddenly, though the air became clearer as they mounted. Then, sweeping round a

sharp curve, they were in Torquillon, whose twinkling window-lights were like friendly greetings. A moment later the leading car stopped before the Hôtel du Cerf.

The man in furs descended and walked towards Madame Blanchefleur's car with the evident intention of helping her to alight, but before he reached her she had already set foot in Torquillon.

"I am grateful to you for your guidance," she said.

"It was an honour." He waved his hand majestically towards the Hôtel du Cerf.

She hurried to the entrance, and met the proprietor, who seemed to be somewhat flurried, in the doorway.

"Where is Monsieur Foucher?" he asked.

"My good man, how do I know? He will probably be here in a moment. For myself, I require dinner, a bedroom, and news of M. Coriot."

"A thousand pardons, madame. You shall be accommodated. I beg you to enter. M. Coriot will return in half an hour. I have his word for it."

The interior of the Hôtel du Cerf was certainly surprising, and justified Coriot's epithet "unique." Madame Blanchefleur saw a wide, arched passage, or hall, with a broad staircase at the far end. On the left was a large room with a vaulted roof, and on the right a smaller room panelled almost to the ceiling. The Hôtel du Cerf, in fact, had once been the gate-house of a monastery, added to in the eighteenth century, and adapted to its present purposes when Torquillon had been a place of greater importance.

Of the present importance of M. Foucher, in the eyes of the landlord of the Hôtel du Cerf, there appeared to be no doubt. The man bowed before Foucher as though his furs were imperial ermine.

"In the name of Heaven," cried the great man to the obsequious host, "why do you keep this lady waiting? Have you no servant to attend to her?"

"Monsieur, I will call Marie at once."

"You should have called Marie before," boomed Foucher. At this Madame Blanchefleur turned, and the light from a central lamp revealed fully to Foucher the alluring features, the slightly provocative smile, of the Hôtel du Cerf's unexpected guest. Foucher blinked, stared for a moment, and then said:

"If I am not mistaken, I have had the honour to be of some little service to—"

"Madame Blanche fleur, monsieur, who has already thanked you."

Foucher inclined his head.

"Then, madame, I *was* mistaken."

This encounter was a little disturbing to Madame Blanche fleur, but five minutes later it seemed merely amusing. Foucher had tact, at any rate. The bedroom to which she was conducted by Marie—a big-boned girl whose lack of comeliness was compensated for by infinite good humour—enchanted her. It had a high, traceried window, and the serene simplicity of the appointments touched her with an emotion as of childhood revived.

She had just completed a somewhat austere and unadorned toilet when she heard the sound of Coriot's voice below. She descended the wide staircase slowly, pausing at a turn which brought her in sight of Jacques, who was standing under the lamp, reading a letter with great intentness.

"I can give you later news of Hélène than you will find there," Madame Blanche fleur said.

"I know that voice," Coriot said, without looking up. "It is music to all the world. If Madame Blanche fleur will make a suitable entrance——"

"What would you consider suitable, my poor friend?"

"Oh, on wings—yes, wings would do!" Coriot crammed the letter into his pocket, hurried to the foot of the stairs, and held out his hands.

"Welcome to Torquillon," he said.

"You are not surprised to see me?"

"No, because I saw the blue-and-white affair in Poirer's shed. I was sure that you would come."

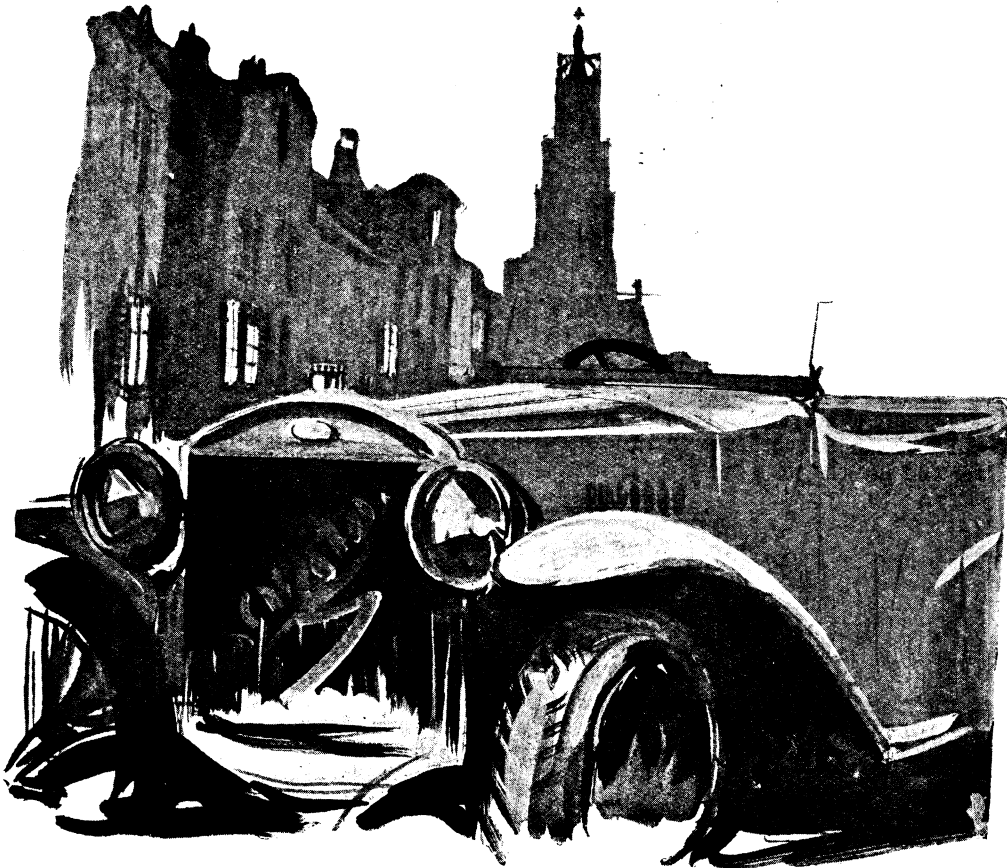
"I almost didn't," said Madame Blanche fleur.

"Oh, almost! And whose car is that other splendid bit of machinery?"

"M. Foucher's."

"Foucher, Foucher? Not *the* Foucher?"

"A person of importance, at any rate," said Madame Blanche fleur. "But he may overhear us."



"I am grateful to you for your guidance," she said. "It was an honour." He waved his hand . .

Coriot led the way to the smaller room. A wood fire sang and sputtered on an open hearth, a lighted lamp was on the table, and there were comfortable chairs to sit in—a rare thing in French inns.

"And now," said Madame Blanchefleur, "what is all this about M. Roland Larivière?"

"It amounts to very little at present. M. Larivière is like a man in a dream, a dream of the past; there is no future in his eyes. He is conscious of the present, follows movements in art and literature, but not in politics, has perfect taste, and encourages talent by paying handsomely



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for the best it can produce. But at the same time—how shall I put it?—his real life seems to be buried, though it is not dead.”

“Why do you suppose this?”

“Because he never speaks of the past, though all the time I can see it in his eyes. Do I explain myself?”

“Is not that so with many people who have suffered?” Madame Blanchefleur asked.

“No doubt,” said Jacques, “but M. Larivière is not like other people. However, you will see him. He has been good to me.”

Poiet, the landlord, announced dinner in person, and conducted his guests to the larger room. Foucher was already there. Stripped of the disguising furs, he presented the appearance of an ordinary, prosperous and reputable citizen who probably felt hungry. But his eyes were not ordinary; one had the impression that behind their curious depth of blackness there was a brain that calculated, assessed, and worked like a nicely balanced machine.

“It is the great Foucher,” Jacques whispered.

“Great? We shall see,” said Madame Blanchefleur.

“I believe, M. Foucher,” said Coriot, “that we have met before, though I cannot expect that you should remember me.”

“I forget nothing,” said Foucher, “though I am not always prepared to congratulate myself on that fact. You, monsieur, are Jacques Coriot, a very promising painter, perhaps more than promising.”

Coriot flushed like a child praised.

“Allow me to present to you,” he said, “my friend Madame Blanchefleur. The Hôtel du Cerf is indeed honoured to-night.”

“There is no need for an introduction,” said Madame Blanchefleur. “M. Foucher was good enough to guide me to this place. The mist in the valley was troublesome.”

During dinner there was little talk. Madame Blanchefleur, in fact, felt extremely uncomfortable. It seemed absurd to maintain a situation which had already been given away. Foucher knew.

“M. Foucher,” she said at last, “there should be no misunderstanding between us, and I confess that I created it myself.”

“It is of no consequence,” he said, “so long as you, Madame Blanchefleur, are not here as a rival, a competitor.”

“For what?” she demanded.

“For M. Larivière, shall I say?”

“I never heard of M. Larivière before to-day.”

“All that Madame Blanchefleur knows about M. Larivière,” said Coriot, “she has learnt from me in the past hour, and that, I assure you, is not much.”

“Good,” said Foucher. “Let us be frank. I also know very little of M. Larivière, but I do know that he has a picture for which I am prepared to pay eighty—a hundred—thousand francs.”

“Then it is not one of mine!” Jacques sighed. He added, turning to Madame Blanchefleur: “Monsieur Foucher is an art dealer, one of the greatest in the world. But he is more than that; he has a passion for art for its own sake.”

“That is true,” said Foucher. “But I also have a passion for making money, and I am not ashamed of it.”

“Did you imagine,” Madame Blanchefleur asked, “that I had come to Torquillon for the purpose of bidding for this picture?”

“I thought it possible, though in writing to me M. Larivière said nothing of a competitor. I have had dealings with him before, and we have come to terms without difficulty. He told me, indeed, that the idea of public auction was repugnant to him—it was degrading. Naturally, I do not agree with that.”

“And what is this picture for which you are prepared to pay so vast a sum?” Coriot asked.

“I will tell you in confidence. It is a landscape, with figures, by Dorigny.”

“Dorigny? The great modern who was discovered after his death?”

“There is only one Dorigny, monsieur.”

“And he,” said Jacques, “starved during his life!”

“That has happened before,” said Foucher, “and it will happen again. It is unfortunate, but genius often thrives on adversity.”

“It is horrible!” cried Madame Blanchefleur.

“Have you seen this picture?” Coriot asked.

“No, but I have no doubt that M. Larivière’s ascription of it to Dorigny is correct. M. Larivière is a man of judgment. Besides, I have bought Dorignys from him before. Perhaps he is the only man who appreciated that great artist when he was alive.”

“So M. Larivière,” said Madame Blanche-

flour, "reaps a thousandfold in comfort and honour what Dorigny sowed in misery and neglect!"

"What would you have, madame? It is the way of the world."

"Sometimes I hate the world!"

"I do not always love it," said Foucher, with a grim smile.

"What I cannot understand," Coriot said, "is this. To-day I spent some hours in M. Larivière's house. He showed me his pictures, but there was no Dorigny amongst them, nor did he mention Dorigny's name."

Foucher looked puzzled for a moment. Then, with a shrug, he said:

"Collectors, monsieur, are a strange race. Perhaps I am strange myself. But I am confident that M. Larivière has not brought me to Torquillon on a fool's errand. Why should he?" With that the great man rose, bowed, and retired to the other room. Madame Blanchefleur drew a breath of relief.

"M. Foucher depresses me," she said. "He is a kind of ghoul."

"A useful ghoul, nevertheless. This informal meeting with him may be a good thing for me."

"Heavens, Jacques! Are you, too, becoming mercenary?"

"My dear lady, I have not to think of myself only," Coriot said with a profoundly serious air. Madame Blanchefleur laughed softly.

"Hélène," she said, "is certainly worth working for. However, she is at present bubbling over with prosperity. The Théâtre Racine rocks at the sight of her!"

"Thanks to you," said Coriot.

"No; she only needed the chance."

"She will not be spoilt?"

"That, I imagine, depends mainly upon yourself. . . . And now tell me more about M. Larivière." But Jacques had nothing more to tell, and Madame Blanchefleur perceived that if any discoveries were to be made, she would probably have to make them herself. But now she thought of Roland Larivière with a certain resentment, as though, somehow, he had defrauded the dead Dorigny.

A fire had been lit in Madame Blanchefleur's room, and for some time she sat gazing at the ever-changing glow and scintillation of the logs, or paced slowly that conventual chamber. The sense of strangeness became a part, as it were, of the strangeness attributed to M. Larivière by Jacques Coriot, whom she had left in an

ecstasy of epistolary composition. Hélène, Madame Blanchefleur reflected, was an exacting little lady. She had genius, that child! And yet, after all, of what account was the genius that depended on the spoken word? Merely to interpret was not to create; the living voice built its own sepulchre in an unending silence.

At that moment Madame Blanchefleur became aware of living voices below. They roused her from reflections which, if not wholly morbid, were clearly not good for her soul's health. She opened the door of her room and listened, squeezing her chin between slightly nervous forefingers. Foucher's boom she recognised and also the slightly vibrant tones of Coriot. Then she heard another voice. Could it be that of Roland Larivière?

Madame Blanchefleur began to descend the staircase in a half-dream; she, who had always been herself, now, by some strange twist of incongruity or circumstance, felt uncertain of herself.

At the turn in the stairs which commanded a full view of the hall she paused. Foucher was standing beside the open front door in an attitude of invitation, and Coriot was standing irresolutely under the lamp, as though uncertain whether, having regard to the importance of M. Foucher, he should advance or retire. Madame Blanchefleur concluded that the person standing in the doorway could be no other than M. Larivière. He gave her the impression of a man detached from his surroundings; even physically he did not seem to make a part of the little group. His grey hair, worn somewhat long, was ruffled above a forehead both high and broad; a moustache, darker than the hair, made a secret of his mouth. He said, in a low, even voice:

"At ten o'clock to-morrow morning, then, M. Foucher."

The great man bowed. "Will you not come in, M. Larivière? Poiret, as you are doubtless aware, has some creditable wine, and Torquillon is not the liveliest place in the world on an autumn night."

"You will find M. Coriot much more entertaining than I can pretend to be," said Larivière.

"M. Coriot appears to have a large correspondence, and a man cannot talk and write at the same time."

"I will abandon the correspondence," said Coriot, "if M. Larivière will cross the threshold and permit me to close the door." Coriot moved forward as he spoke, and at

the same instant Larivière raised his eyes and looked straight at Madame Blanchefleur. He crossed the threshold and paused. Coriot, taking this for a signal of acceptance, closed the door. Madame Blanchefleur, her usual self-possession forsaking her most strangely, was on the point of retreating, when Coriot, following the direction of Larivière's gaze, saw her.

"Madame Blanchefleur," he said, "you appear at an opportune moment. Pray continue your descent." She could do nothing but obey. "M. Larivière," Coriot continued, "I have the honour to present to you my friend Madame Blanchefleur, who arrived this afternoon. She has heard the praises of Torquillon."

"Which as yet, monsieur, I have not seen," said Madame Blanchefleur. She was more embarrassed than Larivière, who, after a formal bow, continued to gaze into her face as though searching for a hint, a clue, an elusive recollection. And she saw in his eyes that sense of the past of which Coriot had spoken. It seemed to be imprisoned there.

"Madame," he said at last, "Torquillon has beauty, yes. Perhaps you will permit me . . . But our friend M. Coriot knows the place as well as I do."

"Impossible!" said Jacques.

"I must go," said Larivière abruptly. "If I decline your hospitality, M. Foucher, be sure that it is for a sufficient reason." And with a word and gesture of farewell he opened the door and vanished. The three stared at each other. Foucher was obviously displeased: he regarded Madame Blanchefleur suspiciously.

"Between us," he said, "we have driven M. Larivière away."

"At any rate," said Coriot, "it was Madame Blanchefleur who lured him past the door. Neither you nor I, monsieur, could have done it."

"Nonsense!" said Foucher. "He is not a bear."

"I will leave you to settle that matter," said Madame Blanchefleur. "But do not quarrel over it. I am willing to accept the blame if that will give M. Foucher any satisfaction."

"It is of no consequence, madame," said Foucher, regaining his equanimity. "After all, I am only here to do business, and if M. Larivière is a little eccentric—well, perhaps I am that myself."

Madame Blanchefleur gave him an appreciative smile and retired.

"The resemblance between that lady," said Foucher, "and a certain other—"

"It is remarkable," Coriot said. "It has often been observed."

"Naturally, my friend," said Foucher, in a tone almost cordial. "If you will show me some of your work to-morrow—I shall have half an hour to spare—we might, perhaps, be of service to each other."

Coriot beamed.

"It might be wise for you, M. Foucher," he said, "to make a small collection of my pictures before the prices soar to those of Dorigny."

"Ah, but Dorigny is dead, and you are very much alive."

"Well, I do not complain of that," said Jacques.

On the following morning Madame Blanchefleur saw the last of Foucher, who departed, in the best of spirits, shortly after eleven o'clock. Carefully placed in his immense automobile was a packing-case which contained, he declared, the finest picture by Dorigny that he had yet seen.

"It is pure sunlight," he said, "a masterpiece. Come to my gallery in Paris and you shall see it. I cannot open the case now, which, by the way, M. Larivière made with his own hands—a curious fancy."

"It is more curious that he should part with this wonderful picture at all," said Madame Blanchefleur.

"Money, my dear madame, makes many separations."

"Yes, even between a man and his soul."

Foucher's shoulders went up.

"Oh, as to that——" he said. He arranged his furs, boomed at the chauffeur, uncovered to Madame Blanchefleur, and in a minute was out of sight.

"He is reputed, madame," said Poirer, the landlord, who had been hanging round deferentially, "to be worth ten million francs."

"That, my good man," said Madame Blanchefleur, "may be remarkable, but it is not interesting."

She had risen late, and did not see Coriot before lunch. He was exuberant.

"Fortune smiles at last!" he cried. "I am going up and up! Presently I shall become dizzy. The great Foucher has bought two of my pictures—at a colossal price! Dorigny never had such luck. I will make holiday this afternoon, and you shall take me in the blue-and-white car."

"I have not yet explored Torquillon."

"That will not take long. It is merely a village in a wood."

"That is romantic, at any rate."

"Nevertheless," said Coriot, "the people scabble after sous."

Torquillon, in the opinion of its inhabitants, was no village, but a little town: it possessed three fairly definite streets and a blind alley. Some of the buildings were substantial and had a decayed dignity. And, of course, there was the Hôtel du Cerf and the house of M. Larivière. That house, like the hotel, incorporated part of a monastic structure, and stood in a large garden surrounded by a high wall. The entrance gate, of old and delicately wrought iron, was always closed. M. Larivière and those having business at the house made their entrances and exits by a modest green door in the wall nearer to the house.

But the glory of Torquillon was in its woods of beech and walnut. These, at this season, displayed banners lovely with the rich heraldry of autumn. From the crown of the hill Madame Blanchefleur looked down upon a maze of intricate and flickering colour, and away to the left the spires of Chartres stood clear against the hazy blue.

That day M. Larivière was not seen in Torquillon. Usually in the afternoon he walked through a certain glade to a neighbouring village, but Coriot, who was there at the accustomed time, reported that he had seen nothing living but a squirrel.

"Perhaps I have frightened him," said Madame Blanchefleur. "Why did you bring me here to disturb the seclusion of this harmless gentleman?"

"He was not frightened," said Jacques, "but naturally he was surprised."

"I confess that I myself was—uneasy, shall I say?"

"Why?"

"Because his eyes, those eyes that hold the past, seemed to question me, and I had no answer."

"You admit, then, that there is something unusual about M. Larivière?"

"Decidedly. But I ask myself, what business is it of mine?"

"Do you blame me for tempting you to come?"

"You showed," said Madame Blanchefleur, smiling, "a keen perception of my weakness."

"In you it is not weakness. What in another would be vulgar curiosity is delicate sympathy in you."

"Ah, you should talk to Hélène like that!"

In the evening a note was brought to Coriot from M. Larivière. The writer said that he had been somewhat indisposed that day, and would like Coriot, if his work permitted, to call on the following morning. He apologised for his abrupt departure, and begged that the apology might be conveyed to Madame Blanchefleur. Jacques handed the note to her.

"Something is in the wind," he said.

"Probably nothing more important than a commission for you, my friend."

"If that were all, he would come to me here."

"As for the indisposition," said Madame Blanchefleur, "a man of taste who has just parted with a Dorigny for the money of a ghoul would naturally feel indisposed!"

Coriot shook his head.

"No, neither Foucher nor I has anything to do with this. But we shall see."

Madame Blanchefleur, when Jacques set out to pay his visit, waited impatiently for his return. In an hour he was back at the Hôtel du Cerf.

"It is as I thought," he said, "though I am still in the dark as to what it is all about. M. Larivière seems no longer to be concerned with the past."

"Then he is really ill?"

"If to be consumed with interest in a lady is to be ill."

"That, as you are perfectly aware, Jacques, is one form of illness," said Madame Blanchefleur.

"Alas, yes. . . . Well, you are the lady."

"This is absurd," said Madame Blanchefleur sharply. "M. Larivière is not a fantastic boy!"

"I assure you that the Larivière of to-day is not the Larivière of two days ago."

"Be good enough to speak plainly," said Madame Blanchefleur. "You weary me, my friend."

"I am merely stating facts. It is for you to discover reasons. In short, M. Larivière wishes to see you this afternoon at his house." This did not astonish Madame Blanchefleur, and she wondered for a moment why it did not. "I have only to add," Coriot continued, "that this request was made with great earnestness, almost with agitation. And I am personally to deliver to him your reply."

"Say," said Madame Blanchefleur, "that I will be with him at three o'clock."

Jacques hurried away once more. He was back in less than half an hour.

"M. Larivière is infinitely gratified," he said. "And you are to enter by the main gate, which you will find open. That gate, as I told you, is usually locked."

"This is most strange," said Madame Blancheffleur.

"It is beautiful! Was I not right to bring you to Torquillon?"

A few minutes before the appointed hour Madame Blancheffleur passed through the main gate, which she found slightly open, and approached M. Larivière's house. And she at once became conscious of an atmosphere different from that of Torquillon. Was it a sense of the past, or was that merely suggested by Larivière's personality? The old parts of the house were of the same period as the *Hôtel du Cerf*; but there the past was remote, and here it seemed to brush against her lips.

The entrance door, which was like that of a church, opened when she was within a pace or two of it, and M. Larivière stood before her. He appeared in some elusive manner to have changed.

"Madame," he said, "you honour me and my house. But even if you had refused to come—which was possible enough—I should have made some opportunity to speak with you."

"M. Larivière," said Madame Blancheffleur, "may I say, with equal candour, that if you had not made the request, I should have sought some opportunity to speak with you?"

"For what reason?" he asked, with an almost pathetic eagerness.

"I confess that I hardly know."

M. Larivière led the way to a room which suggested a complete sequestration, a harmony, as it were, of repose. The two traceried windows, in which here and there remained fragments of stained glass, had a filmy net of silk drawn across them, so that the light, without being obstructed, had its quality softened. The vaulted roof was high enough to question the sunlight with a perpetual gloom.

"May I beg you," said M. Larivière, "to take that chair? It came from Vannes."

"Vannes?" The word was like a pistol-shot to Madame Blancheffleur.

"Why hesitate?" he asked.

"I do not hesitate," said Madame Blancheffleur. Nevertheless, the tips of her fingers throbbed.

"Will you permit me to explain?"

There was a new vitality in M. Larivière's voice.

"That is precisely what I wish," said Madame Blancheffleur.

"And yet—how can I explain? You seem to leap at me out of the past—you who are so real, so actual, so entirely of the present."

"I am what I am," said Madame Blancheffleur. "Why distress yourself and me with dreams and visions? Is not the earth under our feet?"

"There have been times," said Larivière, "when I have doubted it."

"For the love of Heaven," cried Madame Blancheffleur, "throw off this mystery! Become yourself!"

"With you," he said, "I must be entirely frank. One cannot evade the sunlight. Who, then, am I? I will tell you. It is not a long story, and I think I can promise that it will not weary you."

"Have no fear of that."

"Thirty years ago, madame, poverty had me by the throat. But I believed in myself, and I would not sell for nothing work that was the expression of my soul."

"You were an artist?"

"Yes, a painter. To keep myself alive,—for that, at least, seemed necessary—I painted pretty nothings which I could dispose of for a few francs. I had abandoned Paris. At that time I was living in Vannes." He paused, his eyes fixed on Madame Blancheffleur with a disconcerting eagerness.

"At that time also," he continued, "I had the misfortune to fall in love. To the bitter fact of poverty was added the fierce illusion of passion. I had the sense to recognise that my love was hopeless. The lady, if she ever knew, did not hear it from my lips. And in you, madame, I see her again. That is why I am compelled to speak. She married Raoul Guilloré, a clever violinist, then almost as poor as myself."

"He was my father!" said Madame Blancheffleur, with a quick sob. Larivière rose, crossed over to her, and laid his hands upon her bowed head.

"You will forgive this," he said, "for your mother's sake. I never touched her hair. . . . There are colours in the deeper sunset, when gold passes into bronze. . . . Her hair and yours."

"Do you wish to break my heart?"

"Dear child," said Larivière, "these things will not break your heart. You have life before you: all mine lies behind me."

But you make it live again, though without passion or pain. Let me continue my story. When I arrived at that impasse there remained for me only one thing to do, and that was to disappear—to die. I have told you that I had faith in myself. Therefore I disappeared, and in due time I died. It was an easy matter. The report of my death made no stir; no questions were asked. I had not a single relation who knew me."

"Had you no intimate friends?" asked Madame Blanchefleur.

"One only, and it was he who arranged that I should so completely die in order that perhaps, later, I might live. Was there anything wrong in that?"

"I see no wrong," said Madame Blanchefleur, "but as yet I see no light."

"Ah, but I saw it! For ten years I worked in the fields. I painted nothing, I designed nothing. Physical weariness contented me. And I became acquainted with the absolute, the supreme—in a word, with light!"

"With God?" Madame Blanchefleur breathed.

"Perhaps with God," said Larivière. "But I knew that I could never paint sunlight as I did in my youth. I did not attempt it. Also my hands became those of a peasant. . . . And now for the end of my story. Will you follow me?"

Madame Blanchefleur rose and followed him. He had become to her a shadowy figure, yet also real, as pain or pleasure are real, dimly visioned but acutely felt. Off the main staircase, which resembled that of the Hôtel du Cerf, a narrow corridor was revealed by the drawing aside of a curtain. Madame Blanchefleur, still following, found herself in darkness. Then, a long way off as it seemed, a door opened, and she found herself gazing into sunlight, with colour, colour everywhere, conveying its pulsating message from the walls to her eyes. Her companion laid his hand upon her arm.

"Here," he said, "I, who chose to die, live. These pictures were stored in darkness until the appointed hour arrived. They are the work, not of Larivière, but of Dorigny. I am Dorigny."

"I shall never understand such a passion of endurance, a renunciation so complete!"

"Endurance is the lot of humanity. And what did I renounce? Praise, ostentation, the parade of success? You have also to remember that if I had not died I might

still be painting fatuities for a mere existence. Dorigny is dead, and Larivière is a very insignificant person—save for the fact that he is able to control the market in Dorignys." He drew curtains across the windows of a texture somewhat heavier than those in the room below.

"You will observe," he went on, "that there are blank spaces on these walls. There remain, in fact, only twelve pictures by Dorigny. When I die—say in a year or two—perhaps ten will remain. If I admitted Foucher to this room . . . But it is a secret known only to myself, to you, and to one other."

"And the other?"

"Arnaud Dorain, a greater master in his art than Dorigny in his."

Madame Blanchefleur felt suddenly that she should have known this from the beginning. What impulse had taken her to Torquillon? An impulse of reaction: Dorain's note, the message from Coriot.

"Do you know," she asked, "who I am?"

"Yes. You are the embodiment of a dream, the substance of what could never be."

"I am a mere actress!"

"You are Mademoiselle Fadette, of the Théâtre Racine. Foucher, who knows probably every place of entertainment in Paris, could not keep his tongue quiet about that. But to me it is a matter of no importance."

"Of no importance at all," said Madame Blanchefleur, "but Foucher is an impertinent idiot!"

"He is useful to me. He is honest in his way. I sell in order that I may encourage talent and perhaps save genius from the gutter. This house is full of work by living men. I did not die for nothing."

Madame Blanchefleur was reconducted by her strange host along the narrow corridor which guarded the treasure-house. The light of youth revived remained in his eyes.

"You will come to see me again before you leave Torquillon?" he asked. "And perhaps you will some day return?"

"Assuredly."

"Do not forget Dorigny!"

It was all so strange, that when Madame Blanchefleur returned to the Hôtel du Cerf she was not startled to see Arnaud Dorain standing outside the door. He was leaning on Coriot's arm. She approached softly and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Dear master," she said, "it was you, after all, who sent me here!"

"The devil——" Coriot began. He, at least, was startled.

"Enough, my impulsive friend," said Dorain. "If you will leave me with Madame Blanchefleur——"

"It grows cold," she said, "and you are a convalescent."

When Madame Blanchefleur and Dorain were alone together in the panelled room, he said:

"You have, of course, solved the mystery?"

"I solved nothing. It was all explained to me."

"I assure you, dear child, that this is my last plot, and it was something of an accident. You must remember that I only recently became acquainted with the story of your association with Vannes. I believed that you might revive Dorigny's youth, if only for one round of the clock. And that, for a man dead so long, might be an inexpressible and final joy. It was I who sent Coriot to Torquillon. One has to employ the indirect method in life as well

as in romance; and the direct method would not have served the purpose with Dorigny."

"I understand," said Madame Blanchefleur. "At least there is no longer a mystery. I know Dorigny."

"Good," said Dorain.

Madame Blanchefleur never saw the living Dorigny again, though, twenty-four hours later, she and Dorain gazed upon the face of Dorigny dead. And it was the face of a man snatched from life by a supreme happiness.

"Master, did I kill him?" Madame Blanchefleur sobbed.

"No, no. For years his life has trembled upon a thread. And to have the vision revived at last—the vision of unattainable desire. . . . May death come to me in such a splendour of light."

All the remaining pictures of the great Dorigny were bequeathed to Dorain "in trust, at his sole discretion, for the benefit of genius that may need the means of life."

Dorigny's second death was happier than his first.

A further story about Madame Blanchefleur will appear in an early number.

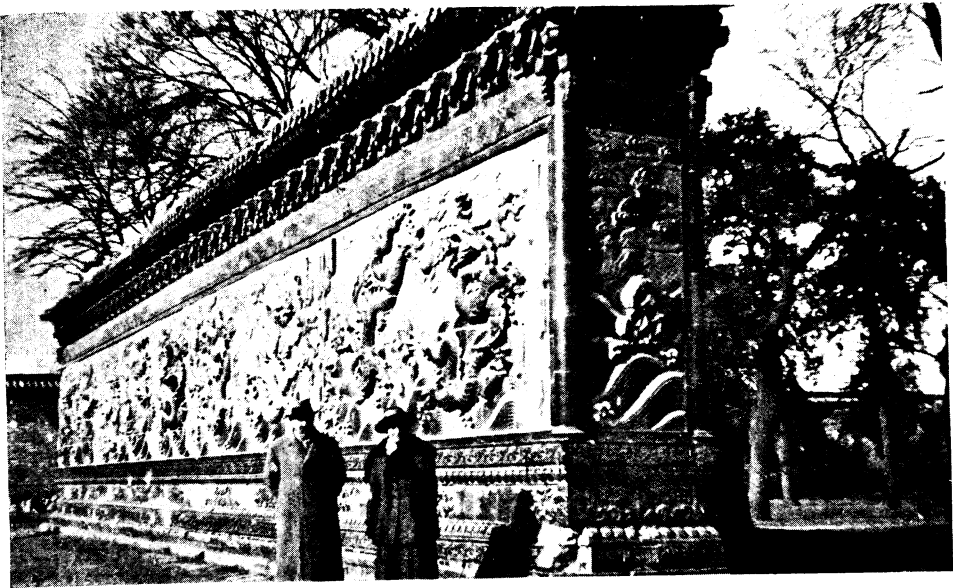
RONDEAU.

WHEN Winter's here with deadening chills,
Then withering blasts sweep from the heights:
Sad-short the days, black-long the nights,
And birds break ice with frozen bills:

And these are few of all the ills
The Old Year, passing out, requites
When Winter's here!

But far behind the snow-capped hills
The New Year shows dim dawning lights,
And "'Tis sure sign that Spring's delights
Come next—next—next!" a lone thrush trills,
"When Winter's here!"

ETHEL TALBOT.



THE NINE-DRAGON WALL OF COLOURED PORCELAIN, EACH DRAGON A DIFFERENT COLOUR, BUILT TO KEEP EVIL SPIRITS FROM ENTERING THE WINTER PALACE, BEFORE WHICH IT STANDS.

THE PRESIDENT OF CHINA AT HOME

AND THE PICTURESQUE ENTERTAINMENTS OF HIS NEW YEAR PARTY

By LADY HOSIE

SINCE the inauguration of the Republic in China in 1911, each succeeding President has given at the New Year an "At Home" to the foreign community in Peking. Brought up under the old Chinese *régime* of emperors and mandarins, I was duly thrilled and curious when my invitation, with its gilt cabalistic signs on a neat white card, arrived, and I accepted with pleasure. The form of the invitation is: "The President of the Chinese Republic and Madame Hsu invite your luminosity to a tea-party at 3.0 on the tenth day of the first moon, in the Presidential Mansion." Attached to the card was a small red ticket which had to be given up at the Palace gate. Eight years ago the Forbidden City was still a mystery to the ordinary dweller in Peking, its great yellow-tiled

pavilions just rising into view behind high pink walls. I had often wondered what lay on the other side. Now I was to know.

In old days there was, besides its own lofty walls and deep moats, a city wall enclosing it, with but three entrances. Now these outer walls have been pierced with white archways, and rickshaws, carriages, even motors, run freely in and out on excellent roads. We drove a couple of miles within these walls, which are built four-square like all other city walls in China, with many glimpses of charming curved ancient roofs adorned with strings of little dogs in yellow porcelain, past deserted guard-houses which used to shelter the Manchu bannermen, who received their rice in return for their allegiance.

Then gateway after gateway, and we had

arrived at the President's Palace, or Presidential Mansion, as I noticed it was called on the invitation card in these democratic days. It stands on the western shore of the North Lake right inside the Forbidden City. Almost opposite is the little island where the Empress Dowager imprisoned the young go-ahead Emperor in 1898 for trying to upset her autocratic and

Chinese Republic, and very nearly Emperor, who always feared he might be shot when crossing this bridge, and who accordingly had this monstrosity perpetrated. And in the end he died, more or less, of a broken heart—or a broken spirit, for his friends fell away from him when he tried to ascend the Dragon Throne. A great man, in spite of his truly Oriental weaknesses. Many a

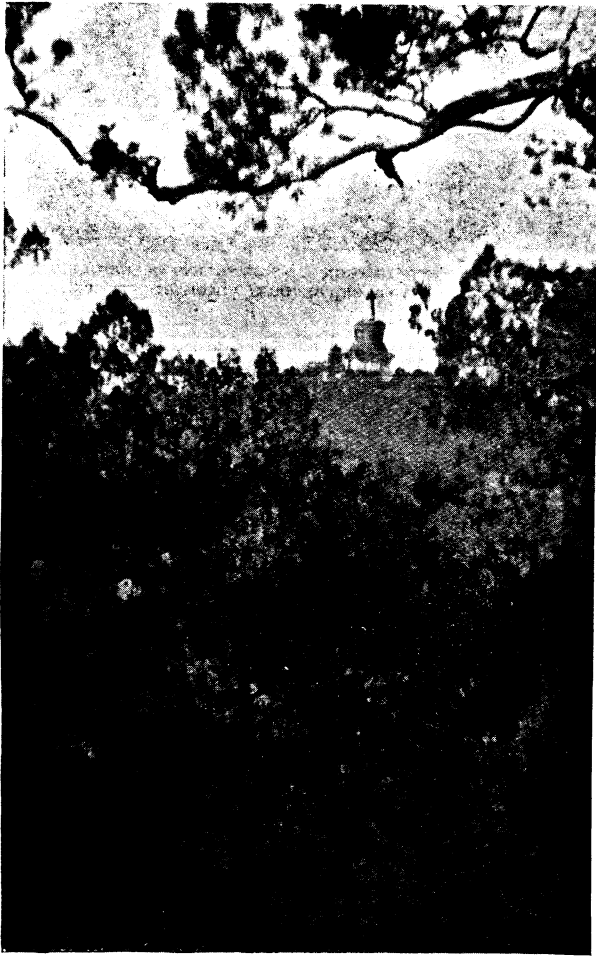
Chinese patriot wishes he were still alive to-day.

Across the lake lies the Winter Palace—a large city in itself. You may now get a ticket of admittance to the grounds of the North Lake, and stand on the hill to the north of that lake, at the foot of the mighty brick bottle-shaped stupa that crowns it, and look over a sea of yellow roofs, all within its sacred walls—the Purple City is its poetical name. Underneath one of those roofs the boy ex-Emperor is hard at work studying Chinese, English, history and geography.

The President's Palace stands by itself away from all these historical buildings, and has been altered from its original form in many ways. One of the big courtyards has been roofed in, and into this, pleasantly heated, we were ushered. There were to be theatrical entertainments, and the stage was decorated with red silk hangings embroidered in gay colours. A Chinese stage is more like an enlarged four-poster bed than anything else. The scene-shifters wander in and out at their own sweet will, and give the actors drinks of tea when their voices are tired—or men who correspond to scene-shifters; for there is very little scenery to shift, and that is mainly of the Elizabethan order, such as a canvas painted to represent a city wall, held up by two men. The

quaintest impersonation was given by a curious-looking gentleman who occasionally kicked his feet up behind and puzzled us for a long time with his behaviour, for he had a cheerful smile on all the while, till it suddenly dawned on us that he was representing a horse, and that the performer following him was supposed to be his rider.

The first few rows of chairs facing the



THE CROWNING STUPA OF THE WINTER PALACE IN PEKING, PHOTOGRAPHED FROM ANOTHER HILL IN THE GROUNDS OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY.

reactionary sway—a gloomy-looking spot this Chinese St. Helena on a cold wintry day. Not far away, either, is a magnificent bridge crossing the lake, built in arched Chinese fashion with white marble balustrades and carved pillars. Its interest, however, lies in a hideous high grey brick wall running its length. This was built by Yuan Shih Kai, the famous President of the

stage were reserved for the Diplomatic Body, a large contingent of whom duly arrived; and there was a good number of other foreigners present who represented varying interests. The play began at three o'clock, before the President appeared; and an actor was sitting on a throne, playing the part of a famous Chinese general of olden days, mourning because he had not seen his mother for

a long time, when the President arrived, followed by his wife and a young daughter, the three being very quietly dressed. We all stood up and bowed to him, and he returned the bow with great ease of manner. I had often seen photographs of him, and was interested to see him himself. He is an uncommonly tall man, with big shoulders, but stoops somewhat. He has the face of a scholar and a philosopher, and

such indeed is, I believe, his character, as far as one can judge by report. He took an empty seat beside the American Chargé d'Affaires and chatted a while, then sat diplomatically beside the British Minister and beckoned the new French Minister to a seat on his other side. But he did not stay very long. And all the while the play went on, the actor bemoaning his mother in an interminable recitative, half sung,



GATEWAY OF ONE OF THE PAVILIONS WHICH STAND AT INTERVALS OVER THE PARKS OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY.

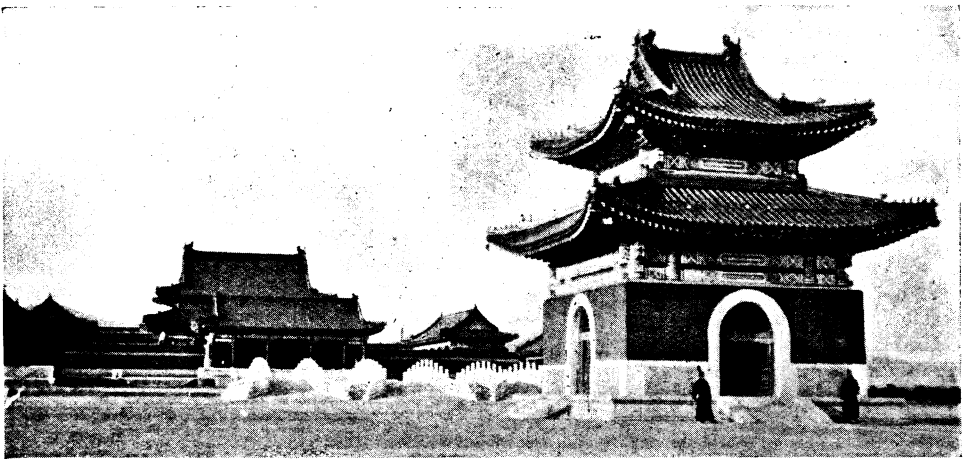


A SUMMER PAVILION IN THE WINTER PALACE GROUNDS, WITH A VIEW ACROSS THE LAKE, WHICH IS FROZEN IN WINTER.

half spoken, in falsetto, though nobody took the slightest notice of him or stopped his talking.

The play was very interesting in its own fashion. This general, who had married the princess of one of the kingdoms into which China used to be divided centuries ago, had a brother, also a general, but in another kingdom, and one, unfortunately, with which the first kingdom was at war. In fact, the brother was the general in command of the attacking forces, and with him was the mother of both the generals, a woman wise in warfare. Now, while our first general was bemoaning and weeping about his mother, his wife, the princess, came in bearing a doll in her arms to represent their infant son. Hearing his complaint, she

appearing, but not interfering, and allowing him to go back unmolested. The trouble arose when he returned to his own camp, for his empress had discovered his little escapade, and was so annoyed with him that, son-in-law though he was, nothing would satisfy her but that she must off with his head. In vain the princess pleaded and wept. The unfortunate general was kept there, kneeling with his hands chained together, in front of the empress, who remained adamant. They brought in two jesters to make the empress laugh, in the hope that laughter would render her more merciful. She laughed, true, but was as grim towards the poor general as ever. Finally the princess broke down altogether, and did something drastic with the small babe in



THE ENTRANCE TO THE TOMB OF THE EMPEROR KUANG HSU, WHICH TOOK FIVE YEARS TO BUILD ABOUT ONE HUNDRED MILES FROM PEKING.

bethought herself of some means whereby her husband might slip away from his own camp into the enemy's, visit his mother, and return in safety. So she set to work to secure a pass for him on some pretext, and she presently returned with it—a very solid pass, too, being a piece of wood as large as a sword. She was quite pretty, with an extraordinarily high falsetto voice. Gaily painted, slim and elegant, it was odd to realise that "she" was a Chinese of the male gender acting a woman's part! Then our general went off happily on his "horse" through the canvas-painted city walls. We next saw him in the enemy's camp, doing his filial obeisances to his old mother (who was very well acted, though again by a man) in a highly respectful manner, his brother

her arms—whether she offered him up as a sacrifice instead, or whether she harangued her mother on the fact that the general was the father of that lady's grandchild, and was referring to family traditions, I could not make out. Whatever it was, it had the desired effect at last. The general was pardoned, his chains were struck off, and immediately two scene-shifters appeared bringing him his rich robes, and all were happy.

Perhaps you will think I was very clever to understand all this. I must confess that if I had been left to the light of Nature, I should not have had the vaguest idea as to what the play was about. But, mercifully, a printed synopsis of the plays was handed to each guest, and one could thus more or less follow the plot. Practically the whole

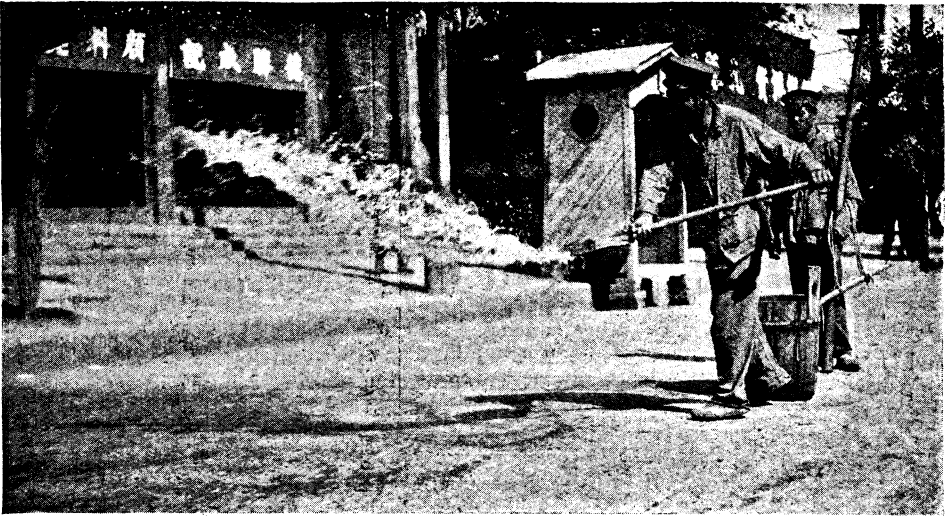


Photo by

[The Camera Craft Co., Peking.

WATERING THE STREETS OF PEKING BY HAND.

play was half spoken, half sung in recitative fashion and in falsetto, and it was very difficult to catch any word of it.

By this time it was after five, and we adjourned for tea, though there was no break in the continuity of the performance. The next play began with a brilliant kind of ballet. Of course again all the actors were men, and, what is more extraordinary, we were having the privilege of seeing some very old and famous players. Three of them were actually over sixty-five, and they sprang round and round and postured as

though they were but twenty-five. One could not help being reminded of the Russian Ballet by the gorgeous colouring, the astonishing dresses, the quaint posturing, though the action is more in the line of mock battles than dancing, and there is never any love-making on a Chinese stage. The heroes strutted about, each with a couple of stupendously long tail feathers in his headgear fully six feet in length, the tips of which they would bend over and hold between their teeth at the crucial moments of their dance. Their faces and



Photo by

[The Camera Craft Co., Peking.

AN ALFRESCO MEAL SERVED AT A TRAVELLING RESTAURANT IN A PEKING STREET.

persons were got up precisely like the warriors and gods depicted on Chinese scrolls, and must be seen to be believed. Some would be painted a bright brick-red with black lines, others plastered with devils' masks, their faces coal-black with white lines across. Tigers' masks were fastened on their waists to make them look brave. A grand battle would begin: lances would be tilted, and the antagonists would rush at and run past each other, dance round and begin again. It was a very fascinating and scintillating performance, one blaze of gyrating colour. The actions were not ungraceful, full of energy and virility, and the whole thing was extraordinarily clever. Anyone who brought it just as it was to London would, I am sure, make a distinct hit.

But one part of it would have to be omitted, or an English audience would rise and slay him. I refer to the orchestral accompaniment. During every single minute of the entertainment the air was confused by the clashing of cymbals and the thudding of drums. There was no respite. There was method in it, and the only good thing to be said was that the band gloried in their labours and performed with the true artistic joy. They were stationed at the side of the stage, and it would have been quite a pleasure to watch their faces and hands, as they beat louder or softer, faster or slower, according to the exigencies of the drama, if the terrific noise had not deafened and stunned one completely. The first play being a trifle melancholy, the noise only at intervals grew so loud that one could not hear one's neighbour speak: but the next play beginning with a battle scene, the orchestra fairly let itself go, and the drummers drummed, the cymbalists clashed their cadences—for there were distinct cadences—so vehemently that the perspiration poured down their faces, and the more they perspired, the more frenzied became their efforts, while seraphic smiles illumined all their countenances. At the end of each series of furiously fast thumps, the drummer would jerk his head as at work well done, and as though he dared the cymbalists to

do better. Heaven knows, the latter needed no encouragement. I asked my neighbour what the second play was about.

"I am feeling so stunned that I'm incapable of understanding a word I read of the synopsis," he said.

"And I feel the same," I confessed. "That was my reason for asking you. My brains are shaken loose and are rattling about."

My other neighbour, however, who has immersed himself deeply in things Chinese, protested at this. He had been to so many Chinese theatricals, he told us, that he now did not even notice the music—we were having difficulty in noticing anything else—and he added that the Chinese playgoer simply does not hear it. Like those who live near a waterfall, he has ceased to be conscious of its roaring.

By this time it was past six, and the second play out of the four that were to be played for our entertainment had barely got well under way. This, by the way, was called "Sacrificing an Arm," and was evidently heroic in strain. If it had not been for the orchestra, I should very much have liked to stay on and see the other plays. The third was entitled "A Country Maid," and I gathered that it included two distinct suicides for patriotic reasons in some bygone century; and the fourth was, I read in the newspaper the next morning, the most charming of all, for in it one of the famous actors impersonated four Revelations of the Goddess of Mercy.

Gradually the foreign guests melted away, rather tired, but sorry to miss so much of the President's "At Home." We should have been sorrier still, could we have foreseen that the gentle-faced Hsu Shih Chang would in a few months have to resign his Presidency, amidst the throes of civil war, into the hands of another, Li Yuan Hung, who had filled the office before and proved himself of the sterner stuff that China sorely needs. After our Chinese palace entertainment, however, we can only hope that the new First Citizen of Modern China will keep up the hospitable traditions of his predecessors.





"I'll try to collect it very shortly after the clergyman says 'Amen!'"

FATHERS *ARE* FATHERS

By HOLWORTHY HALL

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

HE waked me out of a sound sleep at midnight, but I had to forgive him, because our friendship was sturdy and his news was great. He made me get up and put on a dressing-gown, and furnish him with tobacco and light a pipe myself, and then he told me feverishly and in due detail how lucky he was (which I promptly conceded), and how a certain girl named Dorothea Gardner was beyond all praise (which I had always known), and exactly what had happened to them, and who was to be the best man. Incidentally, I had been expecting that appointment for the last six months.

"I just had to tell somebody—now—to-night!" said Perry, springing to his feet and tramping the floor excitedly. He was a

little flushed, and handsomer than ever; his bigness and his boyishness, added to his exultation, made him quite irresistible even to me, so newly dragged from sleep. "I knew you'd be glad. It's incredible, isn't it? And, besides, I want to talk to you about business."

"Business?" I said.

"Yes, about that house they're building on the Sherbrooke estate," said Perry, smoking furiously. "You've got it on your books for sale, haven't you? I've always admired that spot. The trees are wonderful—nothing like 'em anywhere. And the house—it's going to be perfect, absolutely perfect! We've been up there nearly every evening. Dorothea's dotty about it, and so am I. It was up there to-night we found this out—

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we *must* have that house to live in! She wants it. I have only a couple of hundred pounds of my own, but I think I can borrow the money to buy it. What's the price?"

"Sherbrooke went abroad a month ago, and he fixed a minimum price of two thousand two hundred."

"He won't let it, I suppose?"

"No. He means to sell."

"Righto. See you to-morrow."

But on the morrow he came to me sadly crestfallen. His hope of raising the odd two thousand had crashed.

"Try again," I said reassuringly. "Why, Perry, that house has a dining-room, a drawing-room——"

"I know all that. But——"

"And, apart from the mere rooms, one and a quarter acres with a commanding view and fine old trees——"

"But—I'm two thousand pounds short," said Perry. "I could just about afford the cellar, and part of the attic, and the kitchen sink! We used to go up to that place to sit and watch sunsets, long before they ever started building. And then we've seen that house go up bit by bit. We saw them dig the foundations, and crawled round the floor beams—we know every nail that's gone in it. And the arrangement's ideal, and it's just large enough and not an inch too large. There isn't a flaw in it anywhere. And Dorothea's felt the same way about it. And to-night—well, I—you see, that house is a part of the whole scheme." He broke off sharply, and from his attitude I could easily surmise the extent of the depression that had come upon him.

"Is Dorothea as enthusiastic as you are?"

Perry whirled and scorched me with his emphasis.

"As enthusiastic as—— Why, I want it, of course, but *she's* idiotic about it!"

"Pity the poor agent!" I said. "With two people going barmy in the crumpet about a house that lacks a tenant, and then complaining about the price. Perry——"

"You don't understand," he said gloomily. "It's the combination of the land and the house—it can't be duplicated. That's the last scrap of land there is on the hill, and the house *fits* it."

"Two prospective buyers have already looked it over," I told him.

"Well"—Perry picked up his hat and moved towards the door—"I can't say much, but I don't mind telling you it's an awful blow. I'd make every sacrifice to get

that house for her. Maybe I can scheme it out in some way yet—anyway, I'll see you later."

It was on the following morning that Dorothea Gardner came for the first time to my office. I had known her since the age at which we were passionately devoted to peppermint lozenges, but she had never distinguished my business quarters by her presence, because she didn't believe in confusing commerce and society.

I could never regard her as a "pretty" girl, for she was free from the superficiality which the adjective invariably suggests to me. She was small, but not little; she was a woman on a small scale, and not a school-girl who had neglected to grow up. She was a very lovable girl; she was an unusually fascinating girl also, with deep, dark eyes which had plenty of intelligence in them, not devoid of humour. Moreover, she had a marvellous complexion, which owed far more to her habits than to the apothecary's counter, and, above everything, she had a manner that was so gay and serious, and playful and dignified, and so bewitchingly mature and at the same time so undeniably spontaneous, that she baffled all men with her quick-changing spirits.

And Dorothea, trusting that old acquaintanceship would outweigh the traditional avarice of house and estate agents, told me precisely what I had hardened myself to hear.

"It isn't like an ordinary house to us now," she said, with a very unbusinesslike little tremor in her voice. "It's as though it belonged to us—it's as though it's ours already. There's a sort of—of glamour about it. I can't explain. It just *is*! And Perry probably wouldn't like my coming to see about it this way, but—why, it was up on that hill we——" Her colour deepened, yet she had begun a statement, and intended to finish it somehow. "All this year," she said, with obvious repression, "we've been going there, and falling in love with it more all the time. What I want is to get the—the terms. Don't tell Perry, *please*, but I'm going to try to get father to buy it for us."

I could only give her the facts, and I didn't think it was advisable to bring in last night's conversation with Perry.

"It really isn't a high price," I said at the end. "On the contrary, it's a rare bargain. I've thought pretty seriously of buying it myself, but if you want it, it's yours."

She looked at me doubtfully, and I was sorry for her.

"You're sure Mr. Sherbrooke wouldn't let the place?"

"I'm positive, dear," I said, and caught the typist's eye across a filing-cabinet. "Dear as it is," I tacked on instantly, "it's worth it."

She shook her head slowly, and there was no optimism in her gaze.

"It'll be terribly hard on Perry—he's set his heart on that house. I have, too, but Perry's dotty about it." She smiled bravely, but it seemed to me that her eyelids were quivering more than usual. "And when you sit under those trees and look off over the valley, and the other hills and the river——"

"I'll send a note to your father, if you think he'd——"

"No, please, don't," said Dorothea quickly. "I'm afraid it's useless, anyway, but I'll have to be diplomatic about it—oh, ever so diplomatic!" She was right. I knew her father; he was the only living man who could have dwelt in the same house with Dorothea and maintained such a Portland cement sort of disposition.

She drew a long breath and rose—I, too.

"If," she added, "we don't make sure of it now, we'll never have the opportunity again; no one who ever lived there would give it up! I'll talk to father, but——"

"The worst of it is," I said, "that two people are flirting with it now. I don't like to disturb you, but I've a duty to Mr. Sherbrooke. I must sell whenever I can, just as soon as somebody meets his price. So you mustn't put off speaking to your father *too* long."

She took a step towards me and gave me her hand.

"Promise me you won't let anyone else have it until I've talked to father. You can do that, can't you? Only a day or two; I'll know by Saturday at the latest. Is that too much to ask?"

"Ah!" said I. "An option! That's legal enough. And it's common enough, too. All right; I'll give you the refusal of it for forty-eight hours at that price. But an option, you know, isn't valid without a consideration."

"Isn't it?" said Dorothea, her eyes shining. "Is it awfully expensive?"

"The cost of this particular option," I said, "won't bother you a great deal—at least, I hope it won't. It isn't payable just now, either."

"Can't you give me some idea of what it is?"

"I should judge," I said cautiously, "that I'll try to collect it very shortly after the clergyman says 'Amen!'" Then I raised my voice circumspectly. "George," I said to the office-boy, "open the door for Miss Gardner."

It was tactful, but it was a species of privation, nevertheless; I should have preferred to open the door myself—and, if you must have it, to lie down peacefully on the threshold and be a doormat. That's how much I thought of Dorothea.

And then, all at once, Ryhill was stunned by a revelation which carried utter consternation with it—a revelation which sent Ryhill into a mood of blankest impotence, and took away the power of coherent speech from those of us who had grown up with Dorothea Gardner and Perry Maxwell. Dorothea's father, on being solicited for his consent, had refused it outright—had refused to receive Perry Maxwell as a son-in-law, had refused on grounds as trivial as they were irrelevant, and laid down an ultimatum, phrased in platitudes of finance, arbitrary and irrevocable. And simultaneously there came from Perry's father an objection no less grave; so that two lovers were abruptly dissociated, shocked, disillusioned, and all Ryhill shared in an epidemic of bewilderment.

Perry came to me and looked me squarely in the eyes, and pulled me down to a seat beside him, and began to talk, quietly but with a tenseness which showed that he was near the bursting-point.

"It's money," he said, with a curiously dry intonation. "Money! Cash! It's a cold business affair! I'm making seven pounds a week; I told him I thought that was plenty to begin on. He laughed at me—*laughed* at me! He had the nerve to preach at me, and Dorothea has told me he was married himself on half that! He says times have changed. Has to be sure she won't be deprived of——Jerusalem! What does he think I'm made of? He told me in plain English I'd have to show him at least six or eight hundred in the bank, or else at least six hundred salary. He's made it mercenary—that's all he cares about! Nothing about prospects, nothing about me personally—but cash! If I'd only had the grit to say what was on the tip of my tongue——"

"Perry," I said, "that isn't a death-sentence, is it? You have a few friends left. Can't you reason with *your* father?"

"My father!" he echoed. "Oh, Heavens! I should say I have! He's just as bad. I'm only a boy, he considers, a mere child yet. I've got to be advanced slowly in the business, or the old *employés* might kick and leave us in the lurch. If I'm good, and behave myself, I shall inherit the plant in a couple of centuries, maybe, but in the meantime he's got to treat me impartially. Will he lend me any money? No. Don't ask me why not. I'm only his son—I suppose that means my credit's no good. And he knows why I want it, too—to get that place for Dorothea. Will he tell me how soon I ought to be drawing six hundred a year? No. Says it depends on me, not on him. And if I marry before he thinks I'm financially responsible, he's finished with me!" He glanced at me and grinned savagely.

"Of course," I said, "you're of age, Perry—"

"Yes, but I've still got *some* sense left. I'm not going to antagonise two families, and throw up a comparatively big future, and go out hunting for a new billet, and try to be married on ninepence!" He brought his hand down on his knee with a resounding slap. "Mr. Gardner's theory is all right: Dorothea *ought* to be safeguarded; where we split is on the estimates. So good-bye, house!"

"You're still interested, are you?" I was busily completing a calculation which looked very favourable for Perry.

"More every minute, and Dorothea's heart-broken. I had toyed with a notion that *her* father might buy it, and hold it until I could afford to take it over; but now— Well, if we have to wait as long as two years—"

"Two years!" I repeated. "That Sherbrooke place will change hands within two weeks, or I'm an ignoramus. See here, Perry, you have two hundred pounds."

"Yes. Why?"

"Then buy the house yourself!"

He stared incredulously at me, and at length a smile began to flicker at the corners of his mouth.

"That's really funny."

"You'll change your mind in a minute or two," I said. "Now, there's an option of purchase on that house that expires in about an hour and a half. I'll guarantee it won't be taken up. And you're next, and the terms are easy."

"Who owns the option?" asked Perry, somewhat less indifferent.

"I'm not at liberty to tell you. But, if

you care to, you can take the title to that house for two hundred pounds cash. Listen, I'd just as soon buy that house for myself as not. I'll finance the deal for you, if you like. As a matter of actual fact, the place will be mortgaged to me, by you, for two thousand."

He stared at me, incredulous.

"You—you *mean* that?" he breathed.

"Of course I do. For me it's a perfectly sound investment. You can let it at a whopping rent for a year or two till you're better off. Only you'll have to speak up; in decency to Sherbrooke I couldn't hold that offer open indefinitely."

He moved forward to the edge of his chair and gestured excitedly.

"Could you arrange it so that nobody would know? I wouldn't want to have it published; you can see *that*!"

"Certainly. I'd buy it myself, and make a private contract—a signed contract—with you. It would be your property, but temporarily in my name. I'd be simply your agent, holding it for you until you wish it transferred. And if you and Dorothea really want to live in that house—*ever*—you'd better say the word."

"If I had a couple of days to think it over—" he hesitated.

"A forty-eight-hour option," I said, "will cost you one of those cigarettes—thank you."

"I wouldn't even wish Dorothea to know," he said reflectively. "I'd want to surprise her with it. And Mr. Gardner shouldn't know, either; he's always hammering away about speculations. And my father *mustn't* know. He'd rant about my recklessness, and—oh, I don't know. Well, anyway, I'll let you hear from me to-morrow. It's frightfully good of you to do this. The only problem, of course, is the interest on the mortgage. I *think* I can manage that."

By the time that he telephoned to me I had a new goad for him.

"Remember, I told you two people were looking at it," I said. "Well, there are two more now. They came in to-day—only nibbles, but they have some significance. And your option is still good, Perry, but if you don't exercise it, that place will be sold by to-morrow morning."

"Who are they? These other people?"

"One's a solicitor, and one's a London agent. You won't make any mistake, Perry. Let me go ahead and finish the deal for you."

"It's a big responsibility," he said

thoughtfully, "and it'll take all I've got, but Dorothea's so keen about it, and all that . . . *I'll do it!*"

"Fine!" I said. "That's the way to talk. It's sold."

He laughed excitedly.

"I—I'll see you to-night and bring you a cheque."

"Good!" I said. "We'll settle it all in no time."

"You're sure you can keep it secret? That'll have to be a condition. I couldn't risk—"

"Man, dear, *I'm* the buyer! It's your house whenever you want it, but until then it's in my name."

"All right," he said, in relief. "I'll come round to-night."

I had the contract ready when he came. Perry was jubilant when he signed his name, but naturally apprehensive.

"Now," he said, "we've just *got* to let it. Make it for two years."

"Leave it to me," I said. "Leave it to me."

I didn't see Dorothea for nearly a fortnight.

"I suppose our house went long ago," she then said.

"Unfortunately it did," I said, and, as unfathomable disappointment and chagrin leaped to her eyes, I rather wished that I could either have lied more artistically or told the truth. It didn't seem altogether kind of Perry to make her suffer, even for the sake of a subsequent *dénouement* and fireworks of ecstasy.

"Oh!" came from her softly. "Poor Perry!"

"I'm sorry I can't give you the buyer's name," I said. "The only consolation is that it went to somebody who loves it just as much as you do."

"I spoke to father about it," said Dorothea, "but it was so much breath wasted. Our fathers are both perfectly sincere. They're thinking about us, but it *is* hard to realise it sometimes. Perry's father is one of the most autocratic . . . I shouldn't have said that! It's horrid of me!"

"It may be for the best," I said, feeling guilty.

Quite unexpectedly that day Kent, the most prominent Ryhill lawyer, who once before had displayed a passing interest in the place, came to me again and demanded full particulars. He was a solicitor who had speculated in property with considerable success, and knew what he was talking about.

"Would you," he inquired, "be satisfied with a ten per cent. net profit? Instead of making you an offer, I'll do this: I'll give you more than you paid. Frankly, it'll cost a lot to make the changes I should want. The situation is splendid, but the house isn't large enough. Put your cards on the table, and I'll give you ten per cent. over and above cost. For a quick turnover that's fair enough, isn't it?"

I staved him off and sent for Perry.

"There!" I said. "How's that? A profit of ten per cent. and your capital intact, and you aren't far short of Mr. Gardner's limit. I call it speed. What about it?"

He looked quizzically at me, and a far-away expression dimmed his eyes. Then he stiffened and laughed helplessly.

"Has it occurred to you," he said, "that the only way I can make any money on that house in a hurry is by selling it?"

"Why, that's what I'm here for!"

"And if I sell it, I'll be fairly close to having enough money to satisfy Mr. Gardner, won't I?"

"Certainly."

"Then where," said Perry, "would Dorothea and I *live*?"

The alternatives simply had not struck me before; I was mentally limp at the problem.

"But—but the point is—which you really want—"

"I want to be married," said Perry. "But if I took Dorothea to any other place—why, it's one of those things you can't comprehend unless you're in it. It's sentimental, of course. It's—"

"Would you rather wait a few years, then?"

"I don't know," said Perry, greatly harassed. "I don't *know*! Besides, that profit wouldn't be enough. I'd intended to do what we agreed originally, and have the house to move into two years from now. But if somebody offered us, say, two thousand nine hundred for it, I'd have to think twice."

"But nobody has, Perry."

"No; I said *if* anyone did offer that—so I'd have all Mr. Gardner insists on, and all *my* father insists on—why, with the future I have in our business, I think I'd take it—I think so." He shook his head in perplexity. "What a mess!" he said. "It's the one house in Ryhill, and there's Dorothea, and there's the profit—you couldn't have a better example of wanting to eat your cake and have it too."

"Well, shall I give Kent any encouragement?"

"Ask him for two thousand nine hundred," said Perry brusquely. "And I don't know whether I'd take even that!"

I asked, and was scorned for too vaunting ambition; but there were other people who came to negotiate, and I didn't give up hope. Perry went away on business for his father, and twice I had to telegraph him—once when a man offered two thousand five hundred, and once when the solicitor grudgingly offered a trifle more. In each case Perry's response showed the degree of his uncertainty; he was eager to be married, and yet he dreaded to lose, in order to achieve that glory, the home he had bought so quixotically for Dorothea.

But in the course of his long absence from Ryhill he must have obtained a better perspective on the economic phases of the problem; at any rate, he eventually sent me a long letter, teeming with direct contradictions, and false analogies, and impossible conditions, and ended by leaving the matter entirely to my discretion, which wasn't by any means a happy circumstance for

me. Nevertheless, in a final attempt to learn exactly how Dorothea felt about it, I went to call on her one evening.

I had received during the afternoon the best offer so far, and I longed to take it on Perry's behalf, but somehow I couldn't bring myself to accept the responsibility.

Dorothea, I was informed, would be downstairs directly. Mrs. Gardner was out. Mr. Gardner was at the telephone, and would also appear as soon as he conveniently could. So that I sat listening involuntarily to the one-sided conversation in the adjoining room, and reflecting upon the drama and the comedy of life; and by and by, when Mr. Gardner came in to welcome me, I was quite cheerful again, and ready to look at the optimistic side of everything.

"How's business?" he asked me casually.

"Not bad," I said. "You don't want to take that Sherbrooke place off my hands, do you?"

"Not exactly," said Mr. Gardner, eyeing me with unconcealed suspicion. He didn't know whether to condemn me for impertinence or not. "I heard you had bought it. But freak houses like that don't appeal to me, thank you."



"I take pleasure in presenting him, before you all, with this deed"—

"Freak!" I said. "How do you mean?"

"Too small," said Mr. Gardner. "It's not much more than a bandbox. *That's* no investment."

"I didn't know," I said, "but that you might want it to give away some time. I'll admit it isn't any palatial mansion, but

it would certainly make a beautiful wedding gift."

He had a florid countenance, and snapping black eyes, and a fierce and bristling beard, so that when he glared at me he was trebly impressive.

"I dare say," said Mr. Gardner shortly; and for the next five minutes he hardly took



and Mr. Gardner produced it, held it aloft, gestured with it."

his eyes off my face, and I gave him for his pains an imitation of youthful innocence which, if I do say it myself, was semi-professional.

He stayed only until Dorothea came down, and he went away so crustily that Dorothea was abashed; but after I had repeated our dialogue to her, she was woe-fully confused and indignant, and not at Mr. Gardner.

"You shouldn't have said that!" she declared vehemently.

"But, my dear girl," I said, "it's natural enough, when people are engaged, to——"

"That's just *it*!" she flashed. "He won't admit we're engaged!"

"O-ho!" I said. "That's different! That *is* different!"

"He—he won't let us even be engaged until Perry's succeeded—he won't allow it. I can't have a ring or—or anything."

And as I watched her and listened to her, it seemed to me that Perry ought not to wait. It wasn't because I doubted Dorothea's constancy, but because she was so ineffably sweet and ingenuous and young, and the time for a man to marry a girl like that is when he can, while he lives, before catastrophe overwhelms him. Wait two years? Not for all the parents and paternal businesses and houses in Christendom. They could live in a tent, and make those two years worth twenty; they would forget overnight the fantasy which had bound them to the Sherbrooke place. And, furthermore, my judgment had instinct behind it.

"Dorothea," I said, "Perry's badly worried about one thing; it's the same one we've gone over so often. He's spoken to me about it. I wish you'd make it clear, the next time you write to him, that you *can* be contented with him even if he isn't able to give you the house he thinks you want. He's obsessed with the notion that you won't be happy with him unless he can give you that. I'm simply whispering in your ear that if you care to take the trouble, you can relieve him immensely. Will you?"

She was perturbed, as I had intended her to be, and anxiety for Perry's welfare made her lovelier than before.

"He isn't really worried, is he?"

"I had word from him to-day. Yes, he is."

"Why, if I could," said Dorothea, "I'd marry him and live in a barn——"

"And if you say so to him," I interrupted hastily, "you'll take a ton of lead off his heart."

And she must have written him pretty specifically, for some days later I had a letter from Perry, stating that he had finally seen the light, and that if I could effect the sale at any respectable profit I ought to do it.

The letter came as a humorous coincidence. It was put on my desk just after the door closed on the Ryhill solicitor, and it was put down squarely on top of a carbon copy of an agreement—an agreement to sell the Sherbrooke place to the solicitor for two thousand eight hundred pounds. On the authority previously given me, I had acted of my own accord, and at what I thought was a very equitable figure.

And it meant that in less than four months from the date of the ultimatum Perry had attained his necessary cash in hand, and Mr. Gardner hadn't a leg to stand on.

In reporting his accomplishment to Ryhill, Perry stated merely that he had made a very fortunate investment, and his attitude was so independent that nobody questioned him too minutely, not even his own father. He was too stricken with remorse, too sensitive of Dorothea's unwitting sacrifice, to be willing to talk about it.

"All the same," he said to me disconsolately, "I feel stranded; I can't help it. The wedding's only six weeks away, and we're still house-hunting. We shall have to go into rooms if we can't find a house. I hadn't any idea I'd take it like this. Of course, in one sense it was the right thing to do, but——"

"Why 'but'?"

"I don't know," he confessed. "But every time I go past that house it upsets me. Every time Dorothea mentions it I feel like a crook. We both lie to each other like troopers about it, and say we'll find something else that'll do as well, but it's sour grapes. The one thing I have to be thankful about is that I kept it a secret."

"You'll get over that," I assured him; but I felt culpable, as though the whole tangle were to some extent my fault.

The Gardners were acutely formal people, and on a certain night that same week there was a formal dinner-party, embellished by distant relatives who popped up from nowhere, to celebrate the formal announcement of an engagement which everyone in Ryhill already knew. There were the customary toasts and the customary responses. And when, towards nine o'clock, Mr. Gardner got to his feet, he had an air about him

which gave promise of a climax, and won him flattering attention.

I had never seen him surrounded by such an atmosphere of affability. As he glanced down the long table, he was actually stirred by genuine emotion. It strengthened my belief that fathers *are* fathers sometimes. They can't help themselves. There was a curiously mellow quality in Mr. Gardner's voice: he coughed once or twice before he began.

It was a delightfully banal speech, but it had sincerity behind it. He gave Perry a sort of official greeting to the family; he spoke of Perry in a chain of compliments which astonished all of us, and Perry most of all, and he referred in no disparaging terms to Perry's brilliance and Perry's sure success.

"And now," said Mr. Gardner, thrusting his hand in his inside pocket, "one last word, and I shall have finished. There is an old custom which I regret to say has largely fallen into disuse. On many grounds I approve of it, therefore, as evidence of my belief in Perry, and in place of the dowry which, as I have said, is an institution in many lands, I take pleasure in presenting him, before you all, with this deed"—and Mr. Gardner produced it, held it aloft, gestured with it—"this deed to the property erected by Mr. Sherbrooke, as a home for the family my daughter and he will in time—"

He got no further, for the table was in an uproar. Dorothea was clinging to Perry; Perry was staring at me with his mouth open and his pupils bursting; the relatives were applauding vociferously, and beaming at Perry, and calling upon him in turn for a speech; and across from me a thin, sardonic man, who was Perry's father, was deliberately pushing back his chair.

"One moment!" said Perry's father, looking from me to Mr. Gardner and back again. "It was my intention, once upon a time, to make a gift of that house to Dorothea." He looked at me and back to Mr. Gardner. "In fact, I made an offer for it—two offers—*three* offers—"

"Great Scot!" exploded Mr. Gardner, thunderstruck. "Were *you* the man who kept bidding against me?" His jaw dropped. A ripple of laughter ran round the table and grew in volume. Perry's eyes were burning through me, and I couldn't turn aside.

"I dealt through a London man. I didn't want Perry here to think I was—"

"Well, I used Henry Kent."

"Great Scot!" Perry's father motioned towards me and laughed not unkindly. "Young man," he said, "I congratulate you. You must have been born under a lucky star. If either of us had come out into the open, Gardner—if we'd talked this over together—"

"H-hold on there!" said Perry, and he stood, too. "I—this is—it's the funniest thing!" He pointed his finger at his father. "Did *you* try to buy that place through a dummy?"

"That's what he turned out to be, Perry. He was a London agent."

"And—and *you*?"

"Why, yes," said Mr. Gardner, still palpitant. "Through a solicitor—Kent. I didn't want it to come out too soon—it was a surprise."

"Then you can't blame *me* very much, can you? You might have talked it over with me, too, without doing any damage. Naturally, I couldn't know. You see, that house was my investment—the one I told you about. I didn't want it to be known, either. I got it for Dorothea and me, and then I thought I ought to make a profit. I thought Kent bought it for himself—"

There was a moment of terrific silence, and a sudden shout of laughter. Dorothea, utterly overcome by the successive disclosures, was fleeing incontinently, Perry in pursuit. On the threshold he paused to beckon to me, and I was very glad of the excuse to escape. On the lawn the three of us gathered, and talked all at the same time, gesticulating, explaining, until there was a full understanding between us, and nothing more to be said. I even told them how I had once overheard Mr. Gardner telephoning mysterious instructions, and interpreted them aright.

"But after *that*," said Dorothea, trembling with delight, "was it fair? Was it? When you *knew*—"

"Fair!" I said. "I should say it was! More than fair! Why, I let him have it for two thousand eight hundred, didn't I? That was what Kent had offered me in the afternoon, and that was what I was considering. And I heard Mr. Gardner tell Kent to bid up to three thousand if he had to—as *the place was worth it*! Wasn't that fair enough? It was the first I knew of this three-barrelled affair!"

There was a little gasp from Dorothea, and I turned away. I dislike to see any man—even Perry—kiss a nice girl—especially Dorothea—while I'm still a bachelor. From

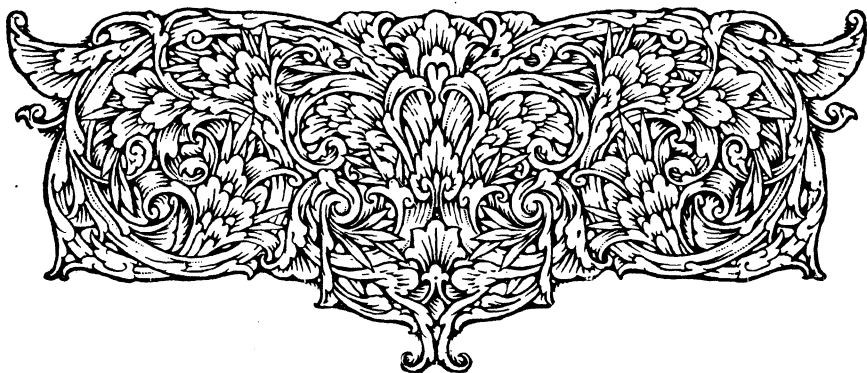
the dining-room came fitful gusts of laughter, and I distinctly caught both Mr. Gardner's bass and Mr. Maxwell's infectious tenor. Fathers *are* fathers sometimes.

And then Dorothea came over to me and touched my arm, while Perry watched us, unprotesting. This was one of the instants when I recognised how incalculably lucky Perry really was.

"I don't know a lot about business," she said breathlessly, "and you arranged the

—the option yourself; but aren't there always commissions—or something?"—and paid me royally, twice over, so that I didn't have to rehearse for the wedding ceremony.

And then we all went in, radiantly cheerful, to make our peace with two stern parents who couldn't possibly keep their faces straight when they looked at any of us. I think that ought to be a very happy marriage.



THE WINTRY NIGHT.

I DREAMED a fairy came and played
 Upon a tiny flute at night,
 And every note her fingers made
 Was like a bird in flight.

And then the fairy sang to me,
 And every breath her lips let through
 Fell downward, downward shiningly,
 As shaken blossoms do.

Her birds with dawn were back again
 Upon my sill, not one note lost;
 Her songs had filled my window-pane
 With blossoms of the frost.

WILFRID THORLEY.



"The offer was too amazing for immediate response."

INNOCENTS v. DIEHARDS

By MADGE S. SMITH

ILLUSTRATED BY G. L. STAMPA

THE window was brightly lighted, as always when Edmund Avery passed it on his way home in the murky months. From sheer force of habit he paused to inspect its display. A great little shop, this, around whose door the well-instructed small boys of a bygone generation of cricket-lovers would hang to gaze in reverence upon a once famous county bowler, of whom it was said that every boy who bought bat or ball got a free lesson in how to handle it from the great man himself. Even boys who could never dream of buying bats, boys who played the game with a cut-out plank against a wicket chalked on a wall, boys of the people, like the boy Edmund Avery had been, hung about the fascinating window, gazing hungry-eyed at the unattainable, whispering hoarsely, "That's 'im!" when the great one moved across their view for an instant. Willow the King was now ousted for the season. Gone were the well-oiled bats, the padded gloves, the tennis racquets, with milder implements of croquet that the great little man did not disdain to sell.

Football held the field, the Soccer game that holds the youth of the people in thrall. Against a background of parti-coloured shirts, in yellows, plums, greens and blue, with every startling contrast conceivable, a row of dangling spherical objects held the eye. Hand-stitched, supple and brown, their prim mouths neatly laced up to hide the vulnerable bladder within, you could almost, if you were a small boy, smell the oily leather right through the window. It looked as if that was what a group of tattered small boys were actually trying to do, so closely were their young noses applied to the plate-glass.

And Edmund Avery chuckled drearily to see them, the while his fingers were caressing a comfortable wad of folded notes in his trousers pocket.

"Funny world, this," he said to himself. "I can buy the whole blessed shop up, if I want, and it wouldn't be a bit of good to me now."

Years ago, when Edmund Avery was a small boy of nine or ten, going limping, with

a cheerfulness amazing to look back on, in his next elder brother's boots, to and from school, he had begun to want, as only a small boy can want something in a shop-window, a "case-ball" of his own. It had been the great dream of his life. The small boys he had played with in his narrow home street played football with a bundle of old rags, sometimes with an ancient cover stretched around newspaper and tied with string like a parcel. Edmund was a leading spirit among those small devotees of the game. And it was his dream of dreams to arrive one day on the particular plot of waste land the Lum Street Rovers held against all comers, carrying a brand-new, smelly, leather ball, the middle one out of the window, tucked proudly under his arm.

"Is it yours, Ed?" the crowd would ask in amazement.

"Yus, it's mine, kids, for the team. An' nobody ain't gotto kick it wi' clogs on," Edmund would reply. Happy Edmund!

But somehow it never came off. For every time Edmund started to save up, his father—he had a typical Lum Street father—found his stocking and appropriated it. It was worse when the team was inspired to save up, and appointed Edmund treasurer. There was nearly enough before that hoard was discovered, and Edmund had to confess to his mates the shameful truth. For a stormy ten minutes Edmund's unprotected body formed an effective substitute for a ball, and the rule about clogs was not enforced. In memory he felt those shameful bruises still.

No, the great moment had never come off. An uncle, who had made money—no one knew how—took it into his head to have Edmund educated, and translated him from the rough-and-tumble of the streets to a private school. He found himself a man before he was ever allowed to be a boy, and a soldier before he was a man in years.

So he had never bought it, never got beyond the stage of wanting it with all his heart, gazing at it in the window, choosing it with discrimination. And now, walking stiffly with a stick, on a cork foot that had the one merit of not feeling when people stepped on it, he saw little enough point in going in and buying a football, even though he could afford a dozen and not miss the money. Edmund's uncle had gone on profiteering all the time the doctors were experimenting with the remainder of Edmund's leg, and he had lately died, leaving the young man very comfortably provided for.

"I used to see myself, many and many a time," thought Edmund, "how I'd strut in, with a whole crowd in the street envying me, and buy the pick of the bunch from the window, and come out as proud as a little dandy-cock. Well, here goes! I'll have it now!"

He glanced around. The crowd was there all right. Bartley's never lacked its bunch of shabby window-gazers. He entered, and stood waiting while a customer was served. The great man was not there; a mere callow assistant was in charge. As a matter of fact, gallant little Bartley, over fifty, and a married man with a family, had "stopped one" on the Western Front.

"Nothing under seven-and-six. We don't stock inferior goods. All our stuff is Badminton standard," he heard the customer assured with the off-handed tone of the superior salesman. The customer turned to go, a lad with a mackintosh down to his heels and an oilskin hat on his head. The bit of chin and mouth to be seen showed disappointment. Avery could sympathise. Had not he himself priced footballs at Bartley's years ago with the same humiliating response?

Two minutes later he left the shop, carrying the best football in stock dangling by its lace from his forefinger, and in his heart the bitter reflection that he was no longer able to kick the thing ten yards.

Out in the street he laughed again his short, rough laugh that suggested pain more than amusement. The little throng on the wet pavement turned on him, to a boy, those envious glances which had been part of his boyish dream.

"Now, then, lads, who wants a football? First come, first served. Who speaks first?"

The offer was too amazing for immediate response. There was a short hush. Then—

"Oh, *please!*" said an eager, low voice close to his shoulder. "If you really mean it!"

It was the same lad who had asked the price of footballs in the shop when Avery went in. In the rain-streaked gaslight he saw again the small features under the oilskin hat. He looked a nice lad, though a lightweight for football.

"Take it. I meant it all right. I've no use for the thing." He tossed it into the boy's hands. "You're welcome," he added carelessly.

"Oh, but how—how very good of you! Really, I—I can't thank you. I wanted it so, and they're so expensive."

The boy's face was very red by this time, so was Edmund Avery's, as he stood looking that oilskin-shrouded form up and down, from a soft curl of hair that had rolled from under the hat-brim, to the line of a trim, short skirt just above two neatly brogued feet where the mackintosh flapped open.

"A girl! A football-playing girl!"

And—Isobel Desmond!

He grasped his stick firmly and turned furiously away, limping with the best speed he could muster from the monstrous discovery.

Isobel Desmond a football-playing girl!

Since the days when Avery was a lad, girls had been getting on quicker than he approved. He was wont to deplore vaguely the passing of the old-fashioned woman. He didn't quite know what type he did approve. His memories of Lum Street femininity were neither gracious nor alluring, and they had certainly not played hockey or kickstone, to say nothing of football. He couldn't reconcile the idea with Isobel Desmond at all. And he had inadvertently made her so radiantly, unexpectedly happy, that he positively found it impossible to get the ball back with a stern objection that he meant it for the boys. He even found it hard to scowl adequately on her stammered thanks. He turned his back and hobbled off across the street, cursing his stupidity that he had actually been the means of assisting a bunch of too up-to-date girls in their unbecomingly strenuous athletics.

"Confound the girls! They're past praying for," he grumbled bearishly. A trio of mill-girls jostled him, upsetting his balance a little and his temper still more, as they elbowed him good-humouredly, passing arm-in-arm.

"There's precious little to live for, like this, precious little," he told himself bitterly. He wished he had never seen that beastly shop, never let himself be reminded how few of his thwarted boyhood's dreams and hopes could ever have realisation now. Football? Why, even a girl could make a better show at football than he, with a wobbly cork apology for a right foot!

It was not until he was halting his lame leg half-way up the many steps that led to the Wednesday Free and Easy that evening, that he remembered that he didn't want to go there again.

For she was Isobel Desmond, the girl in the orange frock. And it was just because he wanted to meet the girl in the orange

frock again that he had repeated his visits to a gathering that annoyed his peevish sensitiveness with the dread suspicion of "uplift."

The Free and Easy was a social club gently unconventional in character and inexpensive. Some kindly people had formed it with the idea of drawing into the net some of those lonely souls, men broken in the War, girls living in lonely lodgings, those who found it difficult to pick up the cheering threads of social intercourse. They met at night, talked, drank ginger-beer and lemonade, ate buns, had a little music, and those who were sound in wind and limb danced.

Avery didn't dance. You can't with a cork foot. Moreover, he hated the new dances. But he had liked sitting in a quiet corner, that first time, talking to the girl in the orange frock. It was not much of a frock, you understand, but rather obviously made by herself. But it suited her so jolly well. She had talked to him in such a free, friendly, jolly way, that girl, looked at him so frankly, started him talking, so that he had forgotten his cloak of reserve and come right out of his shell.

A curly-headed girl with a serious directness of manner that one didn't look for, somehow, under a curly head, with a quick, ready laugh that was good to hear and gone again before you knew. A girl—oh, bother the girl! He knew now she wasn't his sort of girl a bit. He looked up the stairs, he looked down the stairs. He didn't know whether to go up or down. He didn't want to see her again. And before he had made up his mind, she was there, coming lightly up the steps, halting at his side and positively offering him an arm.

"It's an awful stair, isn't it? Do let me give you a leg up."

He had told her all about his cork foot, that first time. There was really no reason for the sudden fury that took possession of him when she spoke of it now, in a tone that was tactfully freed from sentiment. But before his fury could more than show itself in his face, she was off on quite another tack.

"I say——" she began, with a touch of embarrassment, looking at him curiously, with a little heightening of colour in the cheeks that looked as if they had been out all day in the rain and wind. She was wearing a loose reddish cloak now, with a hood thrown back from her head, and the roguish curls that had tumbled from under

the sou'-wester were kept in order by a filigree band. Beneath the cloak he glimpsed the orange frock. "I say, it *was* you—the football, I mean? Early this evening? It was so stupid—I ought to have recognised you. Of course you were the last person to enter my head. You must have thought me a dreadful girl, taking a present like that from a perfect stranger."

"If I had recognised you, of course I should never have taken the liberty of offering it to you," he said, stiffly and disagreeably as he could. "As a matter of fact, I took you, in that light and that setting, for a boy. I didn't look *at* you much."

The girl laughed without embarrassment.

"I'd love you to see my team."
He hobbled down a step.



"He was the goalie, he proudly informed Avery, and they were the Pit View Diehards,

"Heaven forbid! Nothing in my line, I assure you."

She proffered an arm once more.

"No, thanks very much. I'm on my way down. I only came in to excuse myself. Good night."

He raised his hat stiffly and limped away stubbornly, without looking back.

"Bother the girl! Bother all girls!" His stick on the stones rapped out his exasperation.

Bother everything! She had a voice like an angel, she had a face like a cherub. She was just the girl he liked to plan for himself in the moments when girls entered into his plans. And she played football, while he—ah, there was the rub!—he had to limp through life half balanced on a cork foot.

Bother the girls! He would seek their company no more.

So Edmund Avery went no more to the Wednesday Free and Easy.

II.

"Yus, an' next time we're 'avin' a different ref."

Two small boys had slammed into Avery before they saw him at all, so deeply were they involved in the age-long argument of the defeated. Two singularly ruffianly-looking small persons they were, well daubed with mud and blood, in ragged football jerseys and ancient pants cut down valiantly above grimy knees, the leaders of a rabble of about a dozen such, all small boys under thirteen, and vociferous with that shrill, penetrating voice which makes the unaccustomed eardrum ache, and is peculiar to the defeated juvenile sportsman of the masses. Their riotous, fierce, and unparliamentary denunciation of their opponents seethed around the pedestrian who was still reeling from the impact.

"Who won?" he asked. He felt his heart warm to the motley crew.

"*They* did—wi' plenty of cheating," quoth the biggest lad bitterly. He was a big-mouthed youngster



these young terrors, and they had just suffered defeat, five to one."

with a tuft of hair that sprawled over his forehead.

"Won't next time—not wi' a different ref!" cried another. "*Foul*, they says! W'y, they does nuffin' but foul all froo! Play fair, them kids isn't within streets of our lot. We can lick 'em with one hand; but when they begins claimin' fouls——"

"Yus. You seen 'im shove 'is mug agin my elbow? You seen if I 'it that kid a-purpose? Well, then, there y'are!"

"An' wus I off-side that time? Wus yer grandmother off-side?"

The stranger was totally forgotten in the din of argument. He stood listening to it, a familiar din out of the dim past. Oh, but here was Edmund Avery's lost boyhood back again! In that muddy young rogue with a black eye, wearing one football boot and a discarded plimsoll saved from a dustbin—that boy, skinny-armed, knobby-kneed, ill-nourished and panting with eagerness—he saw the boy he had lost years ago.

"Wait till we plays 'em again! We'll wipe the mud wif 'em! We'll give 'em Innercents!" shrilled a singularly small youth shrouded in a huge and holey sweater that had once been white.

He was the goalie, he proudly informed Avery, and they were the Pit View Diehards, these young terrors, and they had just suffered defeat, five to one, at the hands of a snivelling, rotten gang of kids that hailed from the Sunday-school of Holy Innocents Church. They were too young for the Boys' League, they informed Avery. They wouldn't have kids under fourteen. Avery knew all about it without being told. He had been a small boy like that himself, a red-hot, fiery young footballer who never got a kick at a real ball on a real ground, with proper goal-posts standing up in the right place. So they had made a league of their own, and it was not a very flourishing institution, apparently.

They were nice little kids, too. Well, perhaps *nice* was not exactly the word. Oh, the language that poured so naturally and easily out of those youthful lips! But, anyway, they were jolly little beggars, Avery decided.

And it was in his power, so easily within his power, to help those jolly little toughs to be the thorough sportsmen they aspired to become. And why not? It was worth while—wonderfully worth while, it seemed to Avery, with the prospect of making

dreams come true to a dozen small replicas of his own uncared-for boyhood.

"Have you got a ball?"

Twelve heads were shaken disconsolately. They had no ball. The Innocents had a ball, also the right to play along the river-bank.

And Edmund appointed a meeting-place in the warehouse he inherited from his uncle along with his money, and grinned to think how those kids would look when they saw the ball he was going to buy them. No, better still, he would take the whole crowd to the shop to choose it.

The eyes of the Pit View Diehards almost popped right out of their grimy faces when this new friend, a toff to judge by his clothes, but undoubtedly a friend, had done speaking.

"Wait, just wait till we meet the Innercents again!" they cried in jubilation.

And indeed, by the date of that fixture, irrevocably appointed on their very grubby membership card, the Pit View Diehards were a very different proposition. Out of their new club colours and snowy shorts, for Avery had turned out his team "*regardless*," their skinny persons gleamed white and clean. Their stockings were fastened up. They had boots. Something had happened to the flow of their language. This is not to claim that it was entirely cleaned up. It would take more than six Saturdays to do that. But Avery had made a start by ruling out about five of the worst and most popular of the current swear-words, and for the present turned a deaf ear to the rest.

He had put them through some drill, too, in the warehouse cellar, and had taught them some "*physical jerks*," in which the youngsters took great pride. He was finding that it is possible to take quite a lot of time and trouble, and to find a wonderful lot of pleasure, in a pack of small street-urchins.

They swung on to the field in fine style, each boy's heart beating high with pride in his new raiment. The Innocents were waiting for them, and they hurled themselves upon their dandy opponents with yells of derision and several handfuls of convenient riverside mud.

Avery smiled. He liked to see his Diehards hold their own. Already an Innocent lay on its ragged back, while a Diehard rubbed its head in the mud. The Innocents had the advantage. A little grime more or less made no difference to their appearance, for they were as ragged and disreputable a lot as you might wish to see. But for the proud owners of resplendent jerseys and

snowy shorts, a meeting with Mother Earth was a matter for tears.

"Are you going to referee?" asked a small, collected voice. "I think you ought, as I refereed last time we played the Diehards."

He turned sharply to see a small, earnest face under a soft cap, a short-skirted person, with hands thrust deep in the pockets of a woolly coat.

"Yours look like business," she went on, "I think they are rather larger than mine, but I'll back my lot. They beat them last time."

Then her eyes widened. He watched the pink slowly cover her face.

"I *thought* I'd seen your face before. How very funny! And you've got a team of little imps, too! If only I could fit mine out like that! Oh!" She broke off, running forward to a struggling heap of boys. "You *might* call yours off. They're fighting. It's a shame! They're bigger boys than mine."

In not unprovoked wrath, the Diehards had set about their opponents in deadly earnest, retaliating for their mud-smirched attire.

The whistle went to Avery's lips, and his trained pack obeyed it. In an instant the mob disentangled itself. He ordered the rival teams to their places.

"I don't allow *my* boys to swear," said Miss Desmond, as the game began. "I hope you will speak to yours if they do it. Any player in my club is ordered off the field if he swears."

"Same applies to mine," agreed Avery.

He took up his position, but his thoughts were in a whirl, and not centred on the game. What a duffer he had been! What a senseless ass!

Isobel Desmond was linesman. The Diehards' official was a young ruffian with a crooked thigh and an unappeasable passion for the game.

The teams were well matched. There was no slacking on either side. What the Innocents lacked in combination they made up for in dash and a commendable *esprit de corps*, but Avery's coaching had supplied the Diehards with a technique that was new and baffling.

"Goal!"

The whistle went in a babel of vituperation. The Innocents, at first speechless with surprise, found their tongues with a venomous fluency.

When they lined up to resume play, they were minus their right wing. The offending

boy, crimson with mortification, was withdrawing himself from the field, dragging his feet reluctantly in enormous boots, and turning the whites of his eyes in vengeful intent on the conquering Diehards.

"Oh, I say——" protested Avery. He had heard the objectionable expression quite a dozen times from the struggling mass before the sharp shocked order came from the girl's lips. The boy was the hope of his side. Miss Desmond looked as if she might cry. She was biting her lip and her face was white.

"I say, it's too bad. Mine were swearing, too. Come out, two of you, Davis and Kelly. I heard you."

"I never—no, I never. Not *them* words. May my 'ands never come apart!" protested the two.

"Come out," repeated Avery. The boys glowered from behind their comrades.

"Mine are better disciplined than yours," she smiled. The disqualified right wing stood apart, miserably gulping back sobs.

"However, since, as you say, there was language on both sides——" she wavered.

On the hint, the three offenders plunged madly back to their places.

The Diehards scored another goal. The Innocents were battling grimly against superior tactics and superior physique, but the small goalie gallantly saved the next, and rose, trampled but elate, from a tangle of waving arms and legs.

Isobel Desmond patted his back. Her "Played! Oh, well played, Innocents!" came faintly to the grim referee's ears. The Innocents scored a brilliant goal. He decided to say nothing about the most palpable foul that ever disgraced a football field.

Now the Innocents were getting their blood up. With an irresistible rush, that ragged and motley crowd hurled themselves on the foe, and fair between the posts the ball soared over the goal-keeper's head between his upstretched fingers. At half-time the score stood even.

Avery watched the Holy Innocents gathered round Isobel Desmond, impartially handing out slices of lemon for their refreshment. The slices contrasted delicately with their grimy faces and the red rings of their sucking mouths. Avery had neglected that item of the programme. Generously Miss Desmond sent the small captain over with the proffer of an untouched half-lemon. He accepted it with due courtesy. Defiant of sanitary laws, the Die-hards sucked it by turns.

Her eyes, as she looked across and nodded, were very bright, her colour was heightened, whipped by cold wind, stung by rain.

The whistle again, and at it ding-dong went those young stalwarts, as if bruises and kicks and tumbles and mud and discomfort were trifles far beneath the notice of such Spartan players.

The Diehard goalie made a gallant save from another of those terrible but unscientific rushes. An Innocent swore horribly, loud and long.

"No, no!" Avery cried, quick to avert the cruelty of enforcing the punishment of ordering the offender off. But he saw at a glance that she had not heard this time—or she didn't choose to hear. She never looked in the direction it came from. Her lips were tight set. She was heart and soul in the game.

"Oh, play up, Innocents, play up!" she breathed. It was like a prayer. The Innocents strained every nerve.

She was close beside Avery now, as a kick from the corner brought them together. The Innocents were winning. She could afford to be generous.

"Your boys play a very good game," she said. "They have been well coached. I wish I was able to coach mine."

"They want some coaching. Yours are the better team, for all that. Look at the little beggars!" he said.

"They were playing for the church," she explained, eyes glistening. "They are Holy Innocents Sunday-school boys. It gives them an incentive, you know. Your lot are just street lads."

"At present," he retorted. "I'll make them into Scouts when the football season is over."

"Oh, Innocents, *Innocents!*" She broke off with something like a wail, as the triumphant tide of Diehards drove the ball between the posts, and a third goal was added to their credit. The Diehards roared themselves hoarse.

It stood now at four goals to three, the Innocents leading. When, four minutes later, the Diehards scored again, amid a very torrent of objurgations, Avery glanced over to see Isobel's lip quiver piteously. She was on the border-line of tears, and it was only two minutes to time.

Already the whistle was at his lips. "Foul!" he declared, pointing mercilessly to a single offender. Every boy on the field had offended in that delirious two minutes, and knew it.

The decision passed in grim silence from the chagrined Diehards.

"Not *my* boys at fault, that time!" cried Isobel, in a ringing voice. "We are a rough lot, but we do try to play the game. Oh, play up, Innocents, play up!"

On a drawn game the final whistle blew.

"Well, my Diehards, you haven't got your revenge, after all," said Avery, with hypocritical sympathy to his baffled crowd. It was false sentiment, and he felt that they detected it.

"Yus, they drored it, with a lot o' cheatin'," commented the captain.

"Just give us fair play, an' *we'll* show 'em next time—wif a different ref," added his second-in-command darkly.

But Avery was aware of a radiant face turned to him, a beaming face set in loose curls that had strayed from their moorings in the excitement of the finish.

"I must thank you again for that splendid ball. You'll admit we've made good use of it," she said. "It's so terribly difficult to find funds for games. And aren't they dears? Nearly all their fathers are out of work."

"Do you know they love fish and chips?" said Avery. "There's a shop not five minutes from here. Suppose they bury their differences over a feed, and we—if there is a place where we *can* get a decent cup of tea——" he ended dubiously.

"It will be waiting at the Rectory. Father'll be so pleased to see you," she said promptly.

The rival teams fell in two deep, more or less, and headed for the chip-shop. Outside Diehards and Innocents eyed one another with speechless awe. Through a steamy pane they watched their august elders bargaining with the aproned cook. The Diehard captain asserted that he had heard "im" say: "A *big* helping all round."

The man opened the door and counted the crowd. "Just the boys in colours, sir? Be off, now, the rest of you!"

"No, no, all the lot!" cried Avery. "Twenty-three, I make them."

"Come on, Innercents! All the lot! Hooray!" cried the hospitable Diehards, surging madly to the counter. For five glorious and succulent minutes the rivals demonstrated how nicely the world went on before the invention of such tiresome accessories of feeding as knives and forks.

Isobel Desmond's eyes watched them, very dark and deep and tender. "That was good of you. They were *hungry!*" she said.

"A lovely finish to a good game. I say, we could leave them now, couldn't we? You're really looking rather fagged, and I know you oughtn't to stand long. It's only a step, really."

"I own I'll be awfully glad to sit down," he confessed. "My foot's a rotten one to stand on. Perhaps I told you? If I might lean on your arm, I'll try not to be heavy."

And pretending to lean on her, as they progressed delectably slowly towards their tea at the Rectory, Edmund found a chance to look again into eyes that were at once tender with sympathy and bright with triumph, and told himself that, after all, the world holds quite a lot that is very well worth while, and that even a cork foot may be a valuable asset in the ancient and honourable game of Love.



THE SNOW.

CAME a lady wrapped in ermine,
 Came a lady veiled in grey,
 Who could never quite determine
 When to go or where to stay,
 And she wandered in the City,
 Light as any thistledown,
 Till for love, perhaps, or pity,
 She just paused in London Town.

Came a surly clod and wooed her,
 Came a dun and dingy churl,
 Oh, he followed and pursued her.
 Smirching all her grey and pearl!
 Till, like a moth despairing,
 Up and down the hill of Lud,
 She fled the clumsy daring
 Of the loutish London mud.

Very torn her fragile laces,
 Very soiled her lily feet;
 Then he lost her faintest traces
 Where the road goes over Fleet.
 She'd vanished through the Temple Gate—
 No look behind she cast,
 For there the snow can always wait
 Unsullied to the last!

CLAUDINE CURREY.



"‘Useless brute,’ he said. ‘Just as well he’s been bought by someone who doesn’t play polo.’"

ALFREDO

By ARTHUR MILLS

ILLUSTRATED BY GILBERT HOLIDAY

WHAT strange freak of Fate caused the War Office to post Second-Lieutenant Alfred Burgess to the Duke of Kent's Own Royal Dragoons, only that strange imp of unconscious humour that seems to inhabit the minds of certain War Office officials knows. They were—Alfred and the Bidoons, as the Duke of Kent's Own Royal Dragoons were shortly known—radically unsuited to one another. The Bidoons were a sporting regiment, given to polo, pig-sticking, fox-hunting, or whatever sport the country in which they were stationed happened to offer. Second-Lieutenant Burgess cared for none of these things. He hailed from the Argentine, where his father, an Englishman, had married a Spanish lady. However, he danced beautifully, and in this way ingratiated himself in the favour of Miss Helen Maddox (of whom more later). He was of slight build, with a pale olive skin and very bright brown eyes; distinctly foreign-looking, and foreign

in his ways, too, preferring to sit on the lawn of the Gesireh Club in the society of women—Helen's especially—to getting hot and sticky on the polo ground. His brother-officers thought him a regular little Dago, and christened him "Alfredo."

Of course Alfredo got up against Hoskins, the senior subaltern, the latter being an individual, as most folk know, who has the power of making life for junior regimental officers pleasant or unpleasant. Hoskins had some ten years' service. The plains of India had been detrimental to his liver, and the fact that his promotion was much overdue had not sweetened his disposition. He was a long, lean fellow, with a lined face and quick-tempered blue eyes. He was a good horseman, but inclined to lose his temper with his ponies. Alfredo had not been long with the regiment before he double-crossed Hoskins pretty badly.

Ginger was the first offence.

Ginger was one of a batch of twelve ponies

sent down from Khartoum to be sold by auction. He was an Arab, black as night, with restless eyes and a habit of showing their whites. Nevertheless, he was a good-looking pony, and Hoskins, who liked a bit of quality, bid fifty pounds (Egyptian) for him.

"Sixty pounds on the left, sir," said the auctioneer.

"Seventy-five," said Hoskins, thinking to end the matter.

"One hundred pounds," said a voice.

Looking round, Hoskins saw, to his amazement, that the speaker was Second-Lieutenant Burgess. What on earth could Alfredo want the pony for?

"A hundred and ten," Hoskins snapped.

"And ten more—a hundred and twenty pounds bid, gentlemen," said the auctioneer.

Hoskins put his hands in his pockets and walked away. Alfredo acquired Ginger.

"I can't see what good the pony is to you," he said later on to Alfredo, in the Mess.

"I want him for hacking; he wouldn't have suited you, anyway."

"Indeed," said Hoskins. "And why not, may I ask?"

"Well, whoever plays him needs very light hands. I tried him this morning before the sale; he goes mad if you make him feel his bit too much. Try him in a chukka to-morrow, if you like."

Hoskins was too infuriated by the suggestion about his hands to do more than reply with what was intended to be immense sarcasm: "Thank you, I will, if you are not afraid of my spoiling his mouth."

"I don't think one chukka will hurt him," answered Alfredo, whereat another second-lieutenant snickered, caught Hoskins's eye, and hastily left the room.

The next afternoon Ginger was sent down to the polo ground, and, as Alfredo had foretold, proved too much for Hoskins altogether. As soon as the ball was thrown in, the pony became unmanageable, and after a prolonged fight, diverting to the spectators, but damaging to the progress of the game, Hoskins, rib-roasting Ginger and sawing at his mouth, rode him off the ground.

"Useless brute," he said. "Just as well he's been bought by someone who doesn't play polo. He'd be no use to anybody who did."

Alfredo patted the pony's neck and said: "I was afraid he wouldn't suit you."

If ever Hoskins felt he had cause to resent the expression on a man's face, it was at that

moment. However, as Helen Maddox, who had seen his discomfiture, was standing by, he said nothing.

Helen Maddox was the other half of the double cross. She was the daughter of a British Government official, and a remarkably pretty girl. Hoskins, seasoned as he was by many climates, believed he had never seen a prettier. He began by flirting with Helen in a heavy man-of-the-world way, and ended by falling head over heels in love with her. It was when he was in the latter helpless state that Alfredo came on the scene. Alfredo was an adept at the latest intricate tango. Helen found him amusing. She danced with him rather often and rather conspicuously throughout an evening. Hoskins was foolish enough to lose his temper, whereat Helen turned her pretty, independent little head and encouraged Alfredo all the more. White men who have been in the East, and learnt something of the autocratic ways of pretty women out there, will understand Helen's point of view.

However, to continue. On a peculiarly hot and airless May evening, Hoskins and the Colonel sprawled on the Mess verandah, discussing regimental matters. The Subalterns' Cup, to be played for the next day, was uppermost in both their minds. The Colonel thought it good for the regiment that the subalterns should win the cup. Hoskins had misgivings about the Lancers, who had entered a strong team.

"Some of our youngsters know nothing about polo," he said, "and it is a job to keep them down to the amount of schooling they need, especially with a fellow like Burgess setting such a rotten example—can't get him on the polo ground."

"If I were you, I should take that young man in hand." The Colonel looked meaningly at Hoskins.

"I'll do what I can, sir," answered the senior subaltern.

The Colonel left to go for his ride, and the senior subaltern remained on the verandah.

"I'd like to teach him a lesson," thought Hoskins; "but he's such a careful young sweep—he never does anything to give me a chance. You can't do anything to a fellow because he prefers having tea with girls to playing polo, except get rid of him, and it's not so easy to do that in these War Office ridden days. By Jove, there the young tike is, and with *her*, too!"

Hoskins stared as Alfredo and Helen approached the Mess. They climbed the

steps and entered the ante-room. Now, an unwritten rule of the Bidoons was that officers were not allowed to bring ladies into the Mess, except on special occasions and by the Colonel's permission.

After the pair had disappeared, Hoskins sat fidgeting in his chair. "Master Alfredo shall get it for this," he determined. He waited for ten minutes, and then, as the pair did not reappear, he could stand it no longer. He crossed over to the Mess, entered the ante-room, and found it empty. He heard voices in the dining-room, pushed open the door, and saw a sight which it took him a minute to comprehend.

Helen stood by the window with the regimental standard in her hand, while Alfredo tugged at the case covering the colours. A chair underneath the place on the wall where this most sacred treasure usually hung indicated how Alfredo had managed to reach it down.

Hoskins kept commendably calm. He waited till Helen had examined the standard, helped her to replace the case, and then mounted the chair and put it back on the wall. He then, with apologies to Helen, said he had something he must tell Alfredo, if she could spare him a minute. Helen, waiting in the ante-room, only caught a fragment of the conversation that followed.

"But she said she'd never seen a regimental standard, so——"

"You can explain later," said the voice of Hoskins, and there was a queer, dry rasp in it. When Alfredo joined Helen, she guessed that something was amiss.

"You're sure I haven't got you into trouble?" she asked.

"Good Heavens, no," he answered; "but I'm afraid I shan't be able to come to the dance to-night, as I've a job of work to do."

* * * * *

At midnight that night Alfredo confronted his judges. He had been fetched from his bed, none too gently, by an escort of subalterns, and now stood between his guards, a rather pathetic little figure in bright blue pyjamas.

Hoskins, President of the Subalterns' Court-Martial, read over the charge.

"That the accused did, on the afternoon of the——th, unlawfully and without authority bring a lady into the Mess, and take down the regimental standard from the wall and remove the case thereof."

"What have you got to say?" asked Hoskins.

"Well, the lady said she would like to see it, and I didn't know there was any harm——"

"Harm!" Hoskins interrupted. "Do you know that those colours may not be moved even from one building to another without the Colonel's permission and a full escort? Harm! Why, in the whole history of the regiment such a thing has never happened before! Good Heavens! You think you can walk into the Mess and take down the colours, that every officer waits eagerly for the honour to carry on parade, whenever you bally well choose. March out the prisoner. The Court find him guilty, and will consider their sentence."

Alfredo was led out.

"You've done it properly this time," said one of Alfredo's escort, when they were outside. "You'll get the 'horse-trough' for this."

"Done what?" inquired Alfredo, who had learnt nothing in the Argentine about the sacredness of regimental colours.

After a few minutes he was recalled and informed of his sentence by the court. As his escort had surmised, it was to be the "horse-trough."

In the stillness of the night they led him from the Mess to the officers' stables. Here, despite his struggles, they bound his wrists and hands, and, lifting him by his shoulders and legs, dropped him face downwards into a long wooden trough in the centre of the yard. He heard a sharp command from Hoskins, and felt a rush of water about his feet. The water reached his face, covered his chin and lips and nose. Struggling for breath, he raised his head, only to have it pressed firmly down. There followed a great struggle, in which more than one was surprised to find how strong Alfredo was, even though bound.

They had meant only to keep him under water a second or two, but in the confusion he was left rather longer, until, as suddenly as they had begun, Alfredo's struggles ceased.

They lifted him out immediately. During the minutes that followed sweat gathered on the foreheads of Alfredo's brother-officers, and a great fear entered their hearts. But at last, after much rubbing and pouring of brandy on to clenched teeth, he opened his eyes, looked full up into the face bending immediately over him, which happened to belong to Hoskins, and just perceptibly smiled.

"Thank God!" said the senior subaltern,

in a tone none of his brother-officers had heard him use before.

* * * * *

The following afternoon, at four o'clock, all the European community in Cairo assembled on the Gesireh polo ground to see the final of the Subalterns' Cup. The -th Lancers, who held the cup from the previous year, were expected to win again. The Bidoons were under several disadvantages. Their ponies were inferior to the Lancers', who had behind them a young and rich officer always prepared to buy up the best horseflesh in Egypt in the interests of his regiment. Also, unlike the Lancers, the Bidoons' subalterns had not played together as a team until the regiment came to Egypt a few months previously. Their one strong point lay in Hoskins, who was a really experienced player, and out and away the best man on the ground. However, it is difficult for a "one-man" team to beat a good all-round combination. The Colonel of the Bidoons, sitting under the score-board by the side of the pavilion, was far from happy in his heart. He conferred long and anxiously with the captain of his subalterns. The gist of what he said was this :—

"You'll have to take the whole thing on your shoulders, Hoskins. Come through whenever you see a chance, and leave goal to take care of itself."

"I'll do my best, sir," answered Hoskins, who was playing back.

As he climbed on to his pony, he caught sight of Helen Maddox. By her side stood a slim form with his arm through a pony's bridle.

"By Jove, there is young Alfredo and that rotten pony of his!" thought Hoskins. "Wonder if he's telling her what happened to him last night? Anyway, it is a sign of grace on his part to condescend to come and watch the match. Dare say that ducking did him good, though for a moment I was scared we'd gone too far."

Then the bell went for the first period, and Hoskins cantered on to the ground. The inequality of the teams was apparent from the moment the ball was thrown in. The better-mounted Lancers rode rings round the Bidoon subalterns. Their combination and dash were alike excellent, and time and again it was only the magnificent shots up the ground of the Bidoons' back that saved their goal. At the end of the six chukkas the score stood all square. There remained one chukka to be played.

"By Jove," said the Colonel of the Bidoons to his second-in-command, "Hoskins is all there is between us and a most awful licking! Never seen him play better—he's simply magnificent. By Jove, he is down!" The Colonel started to his feet. Two players, going full tilt, had collided in mid-field; riders and ponies lay mixed in a heap on the ground. One man was soon up, but the other lay still. The man who had risen was the Lancers' No. 1. The Colonel ran forward. As he approached, Hoskins rose painfully to his feet. One glance at the way he stood told its own tale. The mainstay of the Bidoons had broken either his shoulder or his collar-bone; he would play no more in that match.

They helped him to the pavilion. Hoskins sank down in the midst of a sympathetic crowd. In his chagrin at the ruin of the chances of his side he had almost forgotten his pain.

"I don't know whom to send out instead of me, Colonel," he said; "there's not another subaltern with any practice at playing back."

"I'll have a try, if you like," said a voice.

Hoskins looked up. Peering over the shoulders of the others he saw the delicate features and pale face of Alfredo.

"You!" he exclaimed. "But I thought you didn't play polo."

"I've played a little in the Argentine," answered Alfredo.

It was chiefly logic that caused Hoskins to come to his decision. He knew the form of the other subalterns from whom he could select a deputy. They were all quite useless. To send one of them on the ground made the loss of the game a certainty. Alfredo was at last an unknown quantity. If he had played, as he said, in the Argentine, he might be a little use. Anyway, in the desperate fix they were in, the experiment was worth trying.

"All right," Hoskins said, "have a go; you can ride my pony."

"Thanks, but I'll ride my own," answered Alfredo.

"It is no good taking that pulling brute on the ground," said Hoskins shortly, recollecting his experience with Ginger.

"He'll be all right, I think," replied Alfredo; and he was "declared" as one of the extras.

A few minutes later Alfredo, mounted on Ginger, cantered on to the ground. The ball was thrown in and collected by the Lancers' No. III., who sent it racing up the ground.



"There are only certain Indians and a very few Europeans who are sufficiently supple to lean right back and hit a ball behind their pony's tail. But it was this very stroke that Alfredo achieved."

Alfredo and the Lancers' No. 1 galloped after it.

"By Jove, that black pony is fast!" said the Colonel, watching Ginger, who had put a length between himself and the other pony.

"Good shot!" exclaimed Hoskins. "By Heavens, what a hit!"—as Alfredo, reaching over on the near side, played a perfectly timed back-hander, and sent the ball flying back up the ground. "Look at

that pulling swine of a pony!" he said the next moment, as Ginger, mouth open and neck stretched, continued full gallop in the wrong direction, despite Alfredo's efforts to turn him. "I knew he'd never manage that pony."

The next moment a cry of dismay went up from the crowd. Alfredo was seen to lean over the pony's neck and suddenly throw the whole of his weight on the left bridle. The next instant the pony was



"A great cry went up as the white-coated figure behind the goal-posts waved his flag announcing the shot was true."

rolling over and over on the ground. Alfredo was quickly on his feet, got the pony on his legs, and mounted him again.

"By Jove," said the Colonel, "I believe he threw that pony on purpose! I've seen 'em break horses of bolting that way in Mexico."

However, there was no time for discussion. The game had become too fast. Alfredo

had hardly, as it seemed, settled down in the saddle before he had turned Ginger and was on the ball again. Crack! He sent it swinging up the left-hand boards. Slipping the Lancers' No. 1., he raced for it. The Lancers' No. 11. closed on him on the off side and tried to ride him off. Alfredo swerved as though intending to leave the ball and accept the challenge. Suddenly, just as

he and the Lancers' No II., riding and pushing at each other knee to knee, came abreast of the ball, Alfredo leant far out of the saddle and, swinging his stick, caught the ball another clip on the near side.

"I never saw a finer shot in my life!" said the Colonel. "Look at him! Look! Look!"

Ginger, now strangely docile, was manifestly the fastest pony on the ground. Alfredo cleared the opposing No. II. without difficulty and raced on to goal. Back only now lay between him and the winning shot. Back meant to stop that goal at any price. Riding in at a great pace, and rather more aslant than he should have done, he crashed straight into Alfredo and hustled him off his shot.

Both men turned and wheeled on the ball together. The Lancer back, anticipating that Alfredo would try a cross-shot under his pony's neck, contented himself with hustling him so that this shot was impossible. According to nearly all the laws of the game, the Lancer back's tactics were correct. There are only certain Indians and a very few Europeans who are sufficiently supple to lean right back and hit a ball behind their pony's tail. But it was this very stroke that Alfredo achieved, a full fifth of a second after both men had overridden the ball. A great cry went up as the white-coated figure behind the goal-posts waved his flag announcing the shot was true. Then the bell rang, and the match was over. The Bidoons had won.

They crowded round Alfredo, those Bidoons, as he rode off the ground, from the Colonel to the youngest trumpeter, and cheered him till the echo was heard in the Mosque. Among them a tall, lean figure, forgetful of an injured shoulder, snatched Ginger's bridle.

"Never saw anything so magnificent in my life!" exclaimed Hoskins, looking up at Alfredo. "Hullo! Where's your stick?"

Alfredo jerked his head backwards. "Dropped it," he said; "couldn't hold it any longer."

"Didn't get a knock, did you?" inquired the Colonel anxiously.

"No, sir, a little bit of a sprain, that's all."

Hoskins, looking at Alfredo's face, knew instinctively when the sprain had been acquired.

"Went into the game with a sprained wrist, too!" he said later in the Mess, to a gaping circle of subalterns. "I tell you he's got the heart of a lion."

* * * * *

The celebrations were over. The last subaltern had gone to his quarters, and a sleepy Mess orderly was turning out the lights.

Alfredo sat in his quarters, trying, as well as he could with one hand, to pull off his overalls. A knock sounded on the door.

"Come in!" called Alfredo.

Hoskins entered.

"I say, kick me out if you like, but I've come to apologise."

Alfredo held out his sound hand. "I'm awfully sorry, Hoskins; I never knew that rule about the colours. I wasn't at Sandhurst, like the others. I deserved my ducking."

"Look here," said Hoskins, "that's enough of that. We all ought to go in the horse-trough for being such cads to you. Of course you didn't know—how could you? But"—Hoskins paused—"you might have told us you were spare man for the Argentine team last summer—I mean, instead of pretending you didn't play. Why"—Hoskins became almost indignant—"if I hadn't got knocked out, we might have lost that match!"

Alfredo said nothing.

"Why didn't you tell us?" Hoskins reiterated.

"I—I can't afford to play polo," said Alfredo, "and I was afraid, if you found out I could play a bit, you'd make me. I only bought Ginger because I knew I could sell him again well—and I did, to the Lancers' captain after the match."

"Good Heavens!" Hoskins stared at him. "That was it—was it?"

"You see," Alfredo continued, "I'm engaged to be married, and saving up all the money I can."

Hoskins flinched ever so slightly, then straightened up. He held out his hand. "Congrats, old man! I thought you were."

"I—I've been engaged a year—she is out in Buenos Aires, waiting for me now," Alfredo continued.

"Good Heavens!" said Hoskins, making an effort to control himself. "*Is she?*"

THE PYGMIES OF AFRICA IN MOTION PICTURES

THE CINEMA'S SUCCESS IN REVEALING THE LIFE
OF A RACE WHICH HAS HITHERTO EVADED
THE EXPLORER

By M. OWSTON-BOOTH

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THE power of the cinematograph to carry us from one side of the world to the other, and even into the remotest recesses of hitherto unexplored lands, is amazingly demonstrated by the

explorer has endeavoured to prove that such peoples do actually inhabit parts of this earth. The tombs of Sakkarah, the date of whose erection is no later than 3366 B.C., bear crude drawings of a pygmy race



DR. VANDENBURGH PHOTOGRAPHED BESIDE A TYPICAL MAMBUTI HOME.

recent series of travel pictures "The Wild Men of Africa," which transported the spectator into the densest jungle, with "Nature red in tooth and claw."

That races of tiny dwarfs and huge giants really exist outside the covers of fairy tale books is rarely credited by the average mind. Here and there, however, throughout the ages, an historian or an

which inhabited the forest swamps of Upper Egypt, near the source of the Nile. Homer, in his "Iliad," wrote of these same stunted people of wild habits. Years after, but still several centuries before the birth of Christ, Herodotus described in one of his historical treatises the seizure of five desert travellers by a pygmy horde. The dwarfs led their captives across forest

marshes to their village of leafy huts. From the descriptions of these tiny warriors given by the escaped prisoners there is no doubt that they were ancestors of the pygmies now dwelling in the tropical forests of Africa. And, later, Aristotle wrote of a pygmy race.

Mungo Park, David Livingstone, Henry Stanley, and Sir Harry Johnston found traces of the little people during their explorations of the Dark Continent; but

depicting the life of pygmies and other wild peoples of that land. A missionary with years of previous service in Africa, he was eminently fitted for the task which awaited him.

There accompanied him a small, venturesome band of Americans, keenly interested in the success of the enterprise, chief among whom was Dr. George Burbank Shattuck, a professor of geology in an American university, who acted as camera man.

Although the main object of the expedition was to screen pygmies in their haunts, many other curious tribes were visited. In all, forty thousand feet of film were brought back, the whole of which will be preserved for scientific record. Eight thousand feet of this, consisting of all of the very best of the picture, has been released for public exhibition, in four two-reel episodes, by the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, who financed the enterprise.

The episode called "The Land of the Pygmies" shows the first photographs ever taken of the Mambuti, as they are called. According to Dr.

Vandenburgh, they are likely to be for all time the only authentic record, as the race is rapidly dying out. When Stanley saw the Mambuti, fifty years ago, they were living on the shores of Lake Albert Nyanza. To-day no trace of them remains there. They have been driven further into the interior of the immense forest by the larger and stronger tribes who coveted the desirable lakeside locations. If Stanley were alive to-day to revisit Albert Nyanza, he would be amazed to find, in place of the little Mambuti, great strapping negroes of the Alouri tribe, more than six feet tall.



TWO OF THE TALLEST OF ALL THE PYGMIES STANDING BESIDE FATHER BUYCK, ONE OF THE WHITE FATHERS IN CHARGE OF MISSIONS IN THE CONGO.

though they caught occasional glimpses of the shy little beings, their customs and characters remained more or less mythical.

It has remained for the intrepid operators of the motion picture to accomplish what explorer and missionary previously failed to do—trace the pygmies to their homes, dwell with them as friends, and bring back to civilised lands indisputable records of pygmy life.

Nearly two years ago the Rev. Dr. Leonard John Vandenburgh set out for Central Africa at the head of an expedition, the object of which was to obtain a film

Through his familiarity with their language, Dr. Vandenburg was able to enlist the services of an Alouri giant as guide into the interior, and the exploring band was able, with his help, to penetrate to the Mambuti fastness in the gloom of the forest. They carried, on the advice of the Alouri, propitiatory gifts in the shape of tobacco and salt. Belgian officials and other Europeans in the Congo district scoffed at the idea of their seeing the pygmies at all, so shy and terrified are they of "whites."

This only made Dr. Vandenburg more determined than ever to reach his goal, and after a thirty-mile walk through the jungle he was rewarded by sighting a Mambuti village. He found this was merely a number

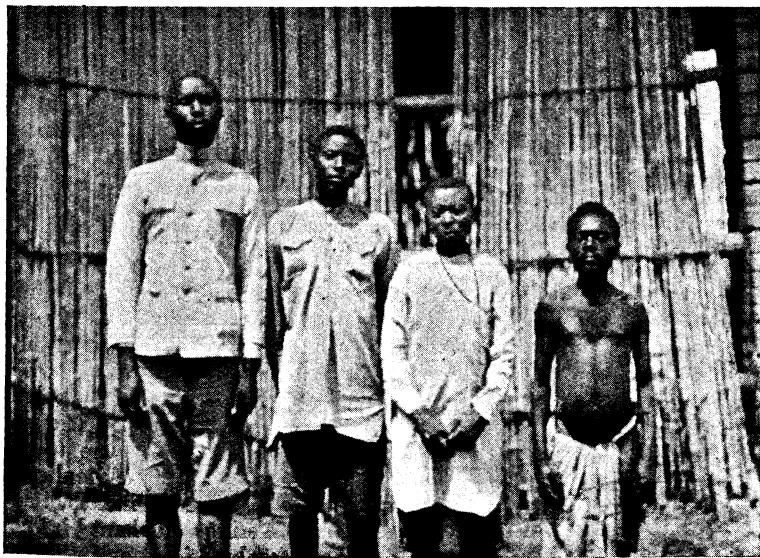


A MAMBUTI VILLAGE CONSISTS OF BEEHIVE-SHAPED HUTS MADE OF BRANCHES, LEAVES, AND MUD.

of civilisation were visible, the pygmies possessing no utensils or implements of any kind save the rudest of spears used in self-defence and elephant-hunting.

Apart from these evidences of humanity,

the village might have been the home of apes as far as refinements of life were concerned. Yet the travellers found that these little black babes of the woods, averaging four feet in height, are really more intelligent than their neighbour negroes of greater stature, while their code of morals is far superior to that of any other savage tribe before Christianisation. They are never known to steal or tell lies, and immorality is totally unheard of in a



ON THE EXTREME RIGHT APPEARS A TALL MEMBER OF THE MAMBUTI TRIBE: WITH HIM ARE REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER AFRICAN PEOPLES.

of beehive-shaped huts made of branches, leaves, and mud. They were so low that he was able to stretch his arm out at his side over a hut without touching it. No signs

Mambuti community. They tend their sick and injured after a primitive fashion, they are polite and merciful, and the younger people evince great respect for and courtesy

toward their elders. They are sunny-natured in the extreme, the only signs of discontent Dr. Vandemburgh noticed, during his month's visit, being on the part of the women.

The Mambuti women, it seems, have joined the general movement of their sex all over the world to throw off slavish customs and endeavour to become economic and political units. All through the ages these dwarfed females have been completely under the domination of their male-kind. Now they are growing tired of this condition of things; weary, too, of their primitive homes in the gloom of the jungle, where sunlight rarely penetrates through the dense trees

berries, roots, leaves, and even rats, mice, and caterpillars for food, and help in the elephant hunt—the only diversion of the tribe. The sole duty the Mambuti man acknowledges towards his family is to build it a hut—after that he works no more! His wife must look after him!

Tobacco is dearly loved by the Mambuti, but so expensive is it—being obtained by barter from neighbouring negroes in return for elephant tusks—that a common pipe is used, and no man ever takes more than one puff. An amusing incident occurred in this connection as the camera failed when taking a picture of the traditional pipe

"party." At the suggestion that the men should take a second puff to give the photographer another opportunity, all, except the chief, refused, and scrambled away with scared faces. With great joy the chief handled the pipe and took a mighty inhalation. The result was as unpleasant for the poor Mambuti chief as it was unexpected to the hardened American smokers. The sad pygmy endured all the symptoms that a



THE DIMINUTIVE STATURE OF THE MAMBUTI PEOPLE IS HERE ILLUSTRATED BY THE RELATIVE PROPORTIONS OF AN ORDINARY BREADFRUIT.

ten-year-old goes through after his first secret cigarette!

and giant creepers; and, in spite of their slavery, they are urging their men on to find better homes and higher standards of life. Little has been accomplished by them as yet, but gradually their growing desire for a finer life may prod this almost prehistoric people forward to higher civilisation, unless their insanitary conditions exterminate the tribe before this is possible.

Is it mere coincidence or the power of thought travelling through space, over thousands of miles, from civilisation to barbarism, that synchronises the revolt of the Mambuti wives with the demands of educated women for better conditions of life?

In a pygmy village it is the women who do the entire work for the community. They tend the children, the aged, the sick, collect

berries, roots, leaves, and even rats, mice, and caterpillars for food, and help in the elephant hunt—the only diversion of the tribe. The sole duty the Mambuti man acknowledges towards his family is to build it a hut—after that he works no more! His wife must look after him!

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ten-year-old goes through after his first secret cigarette!

When the Mambuti scent an elephant, the tribe turns out *en masse* armed with spears. Lacking sufficient strength to kill the brute outright, they harry it through the forest by spearing it from the trees, which they climb with the agility of monkeys.

neighbourhood of the fallen elephant and cutting off the flesh as they require it. These periodical campings out take the form of general holidays, and are prepared for by the womenfolk in very much the same festive spirit as an English housewife prepares for the family fortnight by the sea. What the pygmy wife is saved in the matter of packing she makes up for in the transportation of her family, which devolves entirely upon her minute self.

The Mambuti use no furniture, and though they did in time grow used to having Dr. Vandenburg and his party as visitors, they could not so easily accustom themselves to the sight of such few articles of personal comfort as accompanied the film explorers into Darkest Africa. They would stand in little bunches beside the "towering" civilised tents, timidly patting the unfamiliar canvas and taking shy peeps through the doorway at the

pile up in a group for warmth, just like a litter of puppies.

The life of a Mambuti, in the darkness of



A MAMBUTI FEAST, PARTAKEN OF IN THE SUNLIGHT, INTO WHICH THE "FEMINISM" OF THE WOMEN IS DRAWING THE TRIBE FROM THE DARK WOODS.

the woods, is really pitched in a minor key. The people have no traditions, no lore, no learning, no religion and no superstitions, and in this respect alone they are a unique species of mankind. They have a vague belief in "Ouda," an imaginary devil of their own size and shape, who is responsible for accidental death and all racial calamities. They say that death is the end of everything, and show no trace of ancestor worship or hope of life's continuation in some other sphere. Yet they live a contented, unquestioning, and, as regards practical matters, optimistic existence.

In the other three episodes of the film are depicted quaint and gruesome customs and habits of other tribes of wild African peoples. The tropical climate of Central Africa, with its intense

heat, is responsible for the degenerate condition of its inhabitants. The merciless sun has withered human instincts so that they are below the level of beasts.

L



NO MEMBER OF THE PYGMY TRIBE EVER TAKES MORE THAN ONE PUFF OF TOBACCO AT A TIME.

amazing sight of elevated beds. They could not see any purpose in sleeping like that. For them a bed is rarely so much as a floor-covering of leaves, whilst the children

Stagnation, despair, and a degraded enjoyment of their appalling native customs characterise most of the jungle-dwelling tribes, who, according to Dr. Shattuck, appear to have fallen from a higher civilisation rather than to be climbing from a lower.

Among the Wakikuyu tribe burial of the dead is unknown. The sick are taken out of their huts and left to die in the jungle, their bodies being devoured by hyenas.

In "darkest" Africa shaving is never practised, and yet the native keeps a smooth face. His method is simple and extremely thorough—he goes literally to the root of the matter. When hair appears on his face, the barber simply takes a pair of primitive tweezers and the hair is removed for ever. Eyebrows, eyelashes, moustaches and beards are all subjected to the same treatment.

The African dentist knows no means of removing teeth. When, through decay, a tooth drops out, the tooth of an animal is selected and screwed into the empty socket. The dentist's chief task is to chip and file the teeth of both men and women until they are sharply pointed like the serrations of a saw, for the better tearing of their food, mainly consisting of raw flesh. His dental implements are a rusty chisel and a file. In the Ukamba tribe filed teeth are a sign that manhood has been attained.

The hunt of a great jungle lion, which had been committing outrages in a Masai village, makes a thrilling picture on the screen.

The Masai are a much more civilised tribe than many others in the jungle, and build quite complicated huts of reeds and bamboo poles. One of their quaint dress customs is the wearing of leggings and wristlets of steel wire by the women. These massive ornaments are not removed until the death of the wearer, and are considered to be great possessions.

A narrow escape from disaster was experienced when a lion descended upon Dr. Vandenburg's party and was killed by a Masai spearman when but a few feet from the camera. Dr. Shuttuck, with marvellous sangfroid, did not stop "cranking" throughout the incident, with the result that a most sensational picture was obtained.

In one episode, "Slaying the Hippopotamus," the huge beast is shown in his native haunts. Immense interest attaches to these particular pictures, as they were taken in the heart of the sleeping-sickness country. Many unique photographs were produced of whole villages smitten with the dread trypanosomiasis—villages of death that looked like villages asleep.

From first to last the picture "The Wild Men of Africa" is an education, a thrilling entertainment, and a "magic carpet" transporting one, not only to distant lands, but back almost to prehistoric ages. In Dr. Shattuck's own words:

"In Africa to-day is not to-day; it is 100,000 B.C. A part of the human race has lost its grip on civilisation and slipped back into the æons before history."

ACQUAINTANCESHIP

WOULDST thou give love to me?

Love's rose is dewy wet

With tears of long regret

Foreshown for me and thee.

Lover, pass by.

Wouldst give me friendship? Nay,

Remember life has power

To sunder, hour by hour,

The hearts that cling to-day.

Friend, pass thou by.

Then give me but a smile,

The grace of words that please;

Life will not grudge me these

For my delight awhile

Ere we pass by.

DOROTHY ROGERS.



"'There'll be no fire for us in the morning, you understand.' Munroe nodded, and they turned downhill."

THE AFFAIR OF AHJEEK, THE OTTER

By ALAN SULLIVAN

ILLUSTRATED BY DUDLEY TENNANT

THE immediate cause of Jock MacTier's deserting the Longniddrie coalpits on the Firth of Forth, and taking the trek to Canada that resulted in his joining the Mounted Police, need not be recounted here. It has nothing to do with this story. But it is written that after he became Trooper MacTier at Fort McMurray, a runner came in from the Hudson Bay post on Lesser Slave Lake, and handed Jock's Inspector a hastily written letter. It came from the Factor, and was entirely devoted to the news that Ahjeek, the Otter, chief of a wandering tribe of Blackfeet, had descended from his camp on the slopes of Hunter's Peak, and, swooping into the Smoky River country, had hastened back forthwith, carrying with him forty head of horses, the property of a perfectly

harmless band of Piegans. Ahjeek, it was reported, had with him not less than sixty fighting men.

While the Inspector sat wrinkling his brows, Trooper MacTier came into the office on some matter of minor business, and stood at stiff attention. Glancing over the top of the letter, the officer's eyes rested musingly on the best man in his command. Jock's body was a tough, springy mass which seemed devised by Nature for just such arduous work as fell to his lot. He was not over five feet six, and such was his extraordinary width that he appeared even shorter. His legs, bowed from boyhood, were of the natural curve for horsemanship. His arms, extraordinarily long, hung so that without stooping he could touch his knees, a physical characteristic endowing

him with an amazing and prehensile grip that ere this had often stood him in good stead. His closely-cropped brown hair seemed strangely vivid against the copper of his skin, but it was, after all, the deep-set eyes of Trooper MacTier that set forth his indomitable soul. He possessed the long, unwinking stare of the hawk, and added to this a grey wintriness that suggested the colour of the sea dashing against a bleak and frost-bitten shore. There was a pause. Once again the Inspector's glance fell on the letter, and the name of MacTier seemed to be written between the lines.

"Sit down," he said shortly. "Read this and tell me what you think."

The slightest surprise dawned in Jock's face. One was not usually asked to sit in this office. He took the letter silently and, reading it slowly, committed every word to memory. Then he looked up.

"I know Ahjeek," he said quietly. "I met him at Fort St. John last winter. You'll find it in my report. He's a bad Indian."

The Inspector nodded. "I know him, too," he answered crisply. "His record goes back twenty years, but we've never caught him yet. We're sure he's a thief, but so far I haven't had the men to go about the job as I wanted."

The big trooper sat up a little straighter. "You've got one now, sir."

"Have I? Who?" There was a note of amusement in the voice.

"Me," answered Jock calmly. "If you're wanting Ahjeek, I'll get him."

A little silence fell in the office. "But I can only give you one man; that's Charles Munroe."

"He's a good man," came back Jock steadily, "and plenty as well."

The other had risen and was walking up and down the narrow room. "Look here, MacTier," he said at length, "I really can't allow this. If I could give you four others, or even three, we might take a chance, and then the odds are that blood would be shed and trouble follow on every slope of the Rockies. No, no; I admire your pluck, but it's out of the question. The best thing we can do is to send out for some reinforcements. If Ahjeek wasn't so tricky, it would be different, and—hang it all, man, I can't lose you! I don't mind saying that."

Jock, who had also risen and was standing at attention, only surveyed his superior with passionless eyes. "I'm telling you, sir,

that if you want Ahjeek I'll have him here in two months. Please let me go, sir, for the honour of the force."

This was the irresistible appeal that finally gained assent. Turning it all over in his mind, the Inspector felt strangely and inwardly convinced that such was the nameless force and courage of Trooper MacTier that the hazardous patrol would somehow return triumphant. He was conscious, too, of how greatly the reputation of the Mounted Police was enhanced by just such daring exploits, in which law, authority, discipline, and unfailing courage faced terrific odds time after time and emerged victorious. One did not talk much about these things in the force, but one felt them, nevertheless.

A man, for instance, might tramp to Coronation Gulf in midwinter, arrest a murderous Husky, and march him back through hundreds of miles of ice and snow, and all that would be said among inside circles was that it was good work and the sort of thing that held the force together.

But Ahjeek, reflected the Inspector, was in a class by himself. Year after year he had matched his crafty brain against the law, and year after year he had come out, not perhaps altogether clear, but at any rate unscathed so far as concerned his freedom and possessions. The force knew what Ahjeek was up to, but in the North neither white man nor red is convicted without fair trial and evidence, and thus it was that the tepees of Ahjeek's tribe still peered out over the flattening plain from the wooded flanks of Hunter's Peak.

By noon next day the two troopers were thirty miles on their way. Thirty-six hours later they crossed the divide between Athabasca and Peace River waters, till, travelling steadily, they came, at the end of the week, to a shallow ford through which they splashed to the western bank of the Little Smoky River. The plan of campaign had been carefully thought out. It was MacTier's purpose to strike the Piegan lodges, there collect all the information procurable, and, heading due west, hit the slopes of the Rockies at Beaver Mountain, which, as all the world knows, lies thirty miles due south of Hunter's Peak. Ahjeek, he argued, would expect punishment, if punishment he expected at all, either from due east or from Fort St. John, a hundred miles north-east on the Peace River. That it should come along the slope of the mountains from due south would be

unanticipated. They talked this over time and again, till it seemed at last unassailable.

"You'll understand," said Jock, fixing his eyes on the ragged horizon that now lifted brokenly in the west, "that there'll be no shooting if we can help it. If that starts, we're done. I take it that at the bottom Ahjeek is a coward, for a man who's a thief is most always a coward, too. The thing is, as I make it, to manœuvre him, if possible, into acknowledging he's a coward, then his spirit will snap and that will be the end of it."

Munroe trotted on with covert glances at the man whose great body rose and dipped so smoothly beside him. He did not know much about Ahjeek himself; it was sufficient that MacTier knew. Such was the position Jock held in his comrade's eyes. In the back of his head Munroe had long since decided that this time, at least, it was a chance that either of them returned, but he had concluded that he would sooner die in company with this big trooper than with any man he had ever seen, and comforted himself that in any case they would not die alone. This would be a whale of a fight, and, for one, he was loath to miss it. He grinned silently when Jock prophesied that there would be no shooting.

"You're figuring on walking right up to Ahjeek and saying: 'Come here—I want you!' What do you take him for—a school-boy?"

"Not even that," answered Jock, dropping for an instant into broad Scotch; "he's juist a puir benighted heathen that's lookit lang at as much of the world as his black een could cover, and said to himsel': 'Yon's mine, as it was ma faether's before me.' And mind you," he added reflectively, "he was pairfectly richt. I often wonner what I would feel like maself gin some stranger in a red coat and tight breeches sauntered up to ma hoose and said to me: 'Git oot of this, because the king, your great faether across the seas, has sold the whole thing to a friend of his for reasons which you wouldna understand if I telt you.'"

Munroe looked up with unaccustomed surprise. "I never thought of that."

"There are too many who never think of it"—Jock was once more the Canadian trooper—"but that's why we're here as much as anything else. The country is pestered with crooks who are looking for something for nothing, and the reason we're going after Ahjeek is that he's playing tricks

which the white man has taught him. And that"—his voice lifted a little—"is why there'll be no shooting."

To this Munroe made no reply, but for days it moved ceaselessly in his brain. He was getting new ideas of Trooper MacTier.

It fell on an evening in the middle of the fourth week out that Jock, halting on the summit of a little ridge, stared due north. They had struck Beaver Mountain, according to schedule, and, dipping into the lower land that stretched almost to the base of Hunter's Peak, were now not more than thirty miles from their destination. It being midsummer, the sun was setting well into the north, and already the lofty peaks of the Rockies were steeped in its departing rays. These jagged summits cast their league-long shadows down the eastern slope, but through rift, ravine, and valley still poured a lingering glory. It was all stupendous, supremely magnificent, unutterably lonely, a place of height, space, and silence, in which a world of jumbled crag and plain seemed to have been left in haphazard magnificence like a titanic playground from which its prodigious children had just departed. For the hundredth time Jock drank it all in, till, raising a brown hand, he pointed to a vast spur that dipped gently to the alluvial land beneath.

"Smoke," he said quietly, and, hitching his shoulder, reached for his binoculars.

Munroe, a little breathless, took out his own glasses, and there, in pygmy distinction, lay the tiny and conical tepees of Ahjeek's camp. In this amazing atmosphere they showed up quite clearly, like pin-pointed and miniature cones bathed for a moment in the mellow gleam of sunset. They were too distant to reveal either motion or life, but faintly above them hung a gossamer film of smoke, fed constantly by a number of fine and delicate columns that climbed upward and dissolved imperceptibly. It was all as though the two troopers were staring at another planet on which for the first time had been discerned something that spoke of unsuspected life.

Jock peered long, and ran his eye toward lower ground. "They're 'most a day off yet, and I'm thinking we'll camp here in a gully where we can make a bit fire. There'll be no fire for us in the morning, you understand."

Munroe nodded, and they turned downhill till in a little glade, well watered and well sheltered, the horses were unsaddled and hobbled. The feed was good—a thick,

sweet, luxuriant grass that, Jock reflected cynically, should keep the Piegan ponies in fine condition for the return trip. Before lighting a fire, the troopers made a careful survey of the place, and, finding neither sign nor trail, awakened a tiny blaze which they fed meagrely with perfectly dry and smokeless wood. This done, they stretched themselves beside it and, after a sparing meal, fell instantly asleep.

About midnight Jock awakened with the uncanny feeling that somewhere in the bush he had heard a step. Lying quite motionless, he strained his ears till from a little distance there came the faintest possible crackle of underbrush. His sixth sense warned him that it was no animal—the sound had in a curious way too much conscious deliberation for that—and when he turned, it ceased abruptly. Remaining perfectly motionless, he argued now that, whoever or whatever it was, he himself was within its range of vision, and at that his hand stole out and drew his short carbine slowly toward him. Just then the moon slipped from behind a cloud and cast a cold, bright ray full on the prone figure of his companion.

"Munroe!" he whispered under his breath. "Munroe! Don't sit up, but just crawl over here."

The trooper stirred uneasily in his sleep and stretched his stiff limbs.

"Munroe!" signalled Jock again. "We're watched! Slide over here!"

Something in the voice filtered into the half-conscious brain, and, with a grunt, the trooper raised himself on his elbow and blinked sleepily around. As he did so, his face came clear in the moonlight, and in that single instant a rifle barked on the other side of the glade. Munroe jerked his head back, struggled to his feet, and, spinning quickly, collapsed in a heap. Once again the moon was obscured, and friendly darkness covered them both.

On hands and knees Jock crawled swiftly forward. "Are ye hit bad, Munroe?"

"They've got me this time, old man; it's my left breast, I think." The voice was half choked.

Jock's fingers travelled over him cautiously till they came to a ragged hole in the left shoulder. "Thank God for that!" he said to himself. Then aloud: "No, man, they haven't got you, but three inches lower would have made all the difference. Now lie still, and I'll plug it up."

Munroe groaned while the skilful hands opened his shirt and felt for the wound.

The bullet had gone clean through him, just missing the left ventricle and smashing the lower edge of the shoulder-blade in its passage out. Blood was flowing freely, but, as the other man quickly concluded, this was cleansing, and Munroe could spare a good deal of blood without missing it. The bullet was fired at too short a range to expand, and this, he realised, was Munroe's salvation. Plugging the wound, he drew the helpless man clear of the glade and into the cover of the nearest timber. This done, he sat rigid, his rifle across his knees, and waited for dawn.

It was a long night. Munroe lay quietly, sighing a little as the pain took him, but breathing without difficulty. Beside him, Jock's thoughts turned to the coming day. His job was to arrest Ahjeek and bring him back, and with him forty Piegan ponies. This was still his job, and nothing that had happened could alter it.

The thing that puzzled him most was what to do with Munroe while he was arresting Ahjeek. Their horses would be, of course, stolen—he was already resigned to that—and the only way out that he could see was to carry Munroe to Ahjeek's camp. Thirty miles alone and on foot would have been nothing, but thirty miles for Munroe was a different matter. It did not occur to him that there was any particular difficulty about carrying Munroe thirty miles if the wounded man could only stand it. And at this his brain halted altogether, and for the next three hours he kept an interminable and untiring watch. For himself he had no fear whatever.

Morning leaped over the world, but as yet Jock stirred not at all. It was only after wood, glade, and mountain were bathed in a tenuous light that he pushed slowly forward from the friendly timber, and, after searching glances, set out on what he realised was a hopeless hunt for the two horses. In half an hour he came back, his face grim, but more determined than ever. Munroe was sitting up, with a faint patch of colour in his cheeks. He was weak, though perfectly conscious and in surprisingly little pain. Such was the perfect condition of his body and blood that already Nature had set to work to rebuild the havoc of the night, but whatever aid she offered, Munroe would yet be a helpless man for weeks to come.

Jock ate slowly, talking cheerfully while his great jaws champed at his food. Presently he got up, stretched arms and

legs, and gulped in a gust of air. "It's about time we were starting, Munroe, if you'll just finish that tea. Lap it up, man; there's plenty more."

Munroe's eyes rounded. "Starting—where for?"

"For Ahjeek's camp," grunted Jock. "Man, you're forgetting that you're a member of the North-West Mounted Police."

The eyes of the wounded man rounded with amazement. "You mean," he asked slowly, "you're going to leave me here?"

"Did I say anything like that?" responded the big trooper tartly. "We're starting for Ahjeek's camp now," he repeated, "you and I. Can't you understand plain English?" He picked up something that looked like a strap, long and wide. "You'll just climb into this on my back. It's a new-fangled tumpline, made out of our belts and a few things that every man can spare and still look like a soldier. And, what's more, since you'll be facing south, you'll carry your carbine across your knees and attend to anything there may be on that side of you, and I'll look after the rest." He glanced quizzically at his own contrivance. "Yon flat place is where you sit, and that bar will take the weight of your feet; and as for your head, I'm figuring that the back of it will fit into the nape of my neck, and if you're not comfortable, may God forgive me, but I can't help it. It's a queer-looking thing, I admit, but it's fashioned for the honour of the force. Get up, man, and rest as easy as you can."

Then began that amazing march, the tale of which was repeated for many a year from the Selkirks even across to Hudson Bay, and from Coronation Gulf to the boundary. Munroe, grunting with pain, balanced himself precariously against the broad back, his carbine across his knees, the blood oozing irregularly from the jagged hole in his shoulder. With fingers crooked to the trigger, his gaze roved ceaselessly, as the great body of the giant bore him steadily onward. Hour after hour tramped Jock, his vast lungs breathing deeply, the muscles of his legs springing like whipcord, his lips compressed, his jaw jutting out like a rocky promontory. What vast reserve of strength he then called on he never could tell, but only knew that as the hours dragged out there was in him some extraordinary reservoir of power which he felt would be equal to his prodigious task.

He knew, too, as did also Munroe, that

they were not alone; that from behind rocks, trees and shrubs there peered at him black and beady eyes, and that, paralleling his arduous progress, there moved with him the noiseless footsteps of the scouts of Ahjeek the Otter. It was true that long before this they might have killed him had they so desired. In a way it puzzled the giant that they did not kill him. After a while he put this out of his mind, concluding only that the appointed time had not quite arrived. Of one thing he was quite sure, and this was that neither he nor Munroe would live to be tortured. There were ways of taking care of that. But in all this medley of conjecture, the actual truth never once dawned on him, and the truth was, after all, very simple.

One hears at times of rare instances in which the spirit of man rises to such heights of valour that there spreads from it a strange and overpowering influence which dominates friend and enemy alike. So it was with Trooper MacTier, as he plunged steadily forward toward the distant tepees of Ahjeek, the horse thief. Into the wondering brains of the scouts who dogged him so persistently there penetrated a mysterious awe. They had seen brave deeds and heard brave tales, and around their own camp fire circled the life-histories of their own dark-skinned heroes; but never, so far as memory could retrace, had they heard of anything like this. It was grotesque that this single man, mighty though he was, should imagine that in his solitary body lay the power to bring Ahjeek to justice. That was evident and undeniable; but there remained, nevertheless, in his indomitable progress, something so grim and inflexible, so fixed and valiant, that he seemed more of a god than of a trooper, more of a spirit in human form than a bloodstained officer of the law. And the rest was for Ahjeek to say.

At noon Jock deposited Munroe gently on the turf, bathed his wound, and cared for him as for a child. Again at four o'clock he tended him; and ere the sun had dipped behind the western shoulder of Hunter's Peak, he strode up into the long grass of the little knoll on which lifted the tepees of Ahjeek, his inanimate burden still balanced against those mighty shoulders.

Ere this the scouts had dropped behind; for during the last hour he had been within clear sight of the camp. Moving steadily on, he entered the great, green circle around which the tall and pointed tepees were dotted irregularly. It struck him at once



"His two hands came out, palms up, and stretched gradually towards Trooper MacTier."

that the camp was strangely quiet. Of men, women, children, horses, and dogs he saw none. There were only the swaying pencils of silver smoke that rose from the tiny fire in front of each tepee, and the mysterious hush which in these solitudes heralds the oncoming of night. But still Jock knew that his slightest motion was observed and

studied by hundreds of curious eyes. Presently he kneeled, and, twisting, lifted Munroe's stiff body, laying him gently in the grass. At this Monroe smiled wearily and fell instantly asleep, after which Jock heaved himself up, and, staring at the biggest tepee of all, called aloud in the Blackfoot tongue :

"It was the peace sign of the prairie . . . even Ahjeek, however double-faced, would never dare to misuse this ancient and universal token."



"Ahjeek, I would speak to Ahjeek."

For answer there was only the crackle of the brushwood fire.

"Ahjeek," repeated Jock, with a lift in his voice, "I have that which I would say."

The deerskin curtain hanging across the door of the biggest tepee was pushed slowly aside, and Ahjeek the Otter stood framed against the dark interior. He wore a long leather coat embroidered with quills and fringed with bright and multi-coloured

beads. On his head was the great head-dress of a chief, topped with eagle feathers and hanging almost to his waist. His legs were encased in buckskin. From beneath the eagle feathers his coal-black eyes gleamed frostily. The face was smooth and cruel, the lips tight, and on the dusky features there rested a baffling expression of triumphant resentment. He stepped forward till the mellow sunlight fell full on his tall, straight body.

"I am Ahjeek of the Blackfeet." He glanced at the slumbering form of Munroe, then stared straight into the grey orbs of Trooper MacTier. "Let my brother speak."

"It is late," answered Jock evenly, "and before I speak it is well to eat and to care for this man who"—he hesitated—"is sick."

Ahjeek smiled grimly. "It is well said, and there is much time to talk." And, turning, he waved a hand.

At this there began a buzz in the other lodges. Other deerskin doors were cast aside, and the men of Ahjeek's tribe stepped out. These were fighting men, wearing no garb of peace. Naked to the waist, their bodies were painted with every well-known emblem of war. They came one by one, till, glancing round the circle, Jock counted over sixty. At that the blood flew to his temples. He was glad that Munroe was asleep.

Ahjeek motioned to a tepee standing a little apart from the others. "Take it, and put the sick man there. Eat and sleep, and to-morrow we will talk. It is not well," he added meaningly, "to try the body when the belly is empty."

In spite of himself, Jock's pulse slowed. The only interpretation he could find was that to-morrow there would be torture, and that Ahjeek knew by long experience that the man who was well fed has a stronger lease of life than the man who is hungry. But no sign of this was reflected in his steady eyes.

For hours that night he sat motionless beside Munroe, every instinct tense and alert. The air was as still as death. He heard once the neigh of a pony, and after that the muffled thunder of hoofs that dwindled into the distance. The Piegan ponies, he concluded, were being moved a little farther away. At midnight, yielding to a suspense that could be no longer endured, he took off his boots and, lifting a corner of the lodge door, peered out into the purple gloom. He could see only the ring of conical tepees, a star-sprinkled sky, and the loom of Hunter's Peak as it lifted magnificently to the west. Quite automatically he balanced the chance of their joint escape, then stepped slowly forward and, standing erect, drew in great, noiseless gulps of cool, sweet air. At this moment came a smooth voice from beside him:

"My brother cannot sleep. Or does he walk by night, like the black bear and

wolverine?" Ahjeek chuckled softly in the darkness.

Day broke with recurrent splendour over the camp. Again rose in front of each lodge a tiny pencil of smoke, while there swarmed over the grass-covered central space men, women, children, and dogs, stretching their supple bodies in the blazing sun.

The night had gone hardly with Trooper MacTier. He had taken the precaution to tie his carbine, as also that of Munroe, to his wrist, lest swarthy hands should creep beneath the lodge walls and search for that which they prized above all else. Twice in the shadows he had felt a gentle tug, and each time, as he jerked the weapons quickly back, there had come through the deerskin walls a grunt of disgust. Morning found him more weary than he dared admit, but there seemed to have settled over him a curious glaze of fatigue, through which no further exhaustion could attack his powerful frame. Munroe had slept fitfully, mumbling at times snatches of long-forgotten things which had carried Trooper MacTier six thousand miles from the flanks of Hunter's Peak and revived within him that which he would fain forget.

In the middle of the grassy space sat Ahjeek, an hour later, and opposite him and a few feet distant squatted MacTier. In front of every lodge rested a group so motionless as to appear carved out of stone. Between the lodges and around the two central figures stretched a circle of fighting men, the sun glinting on their ruddy shoulders, their knees covered with bright and gaudy blankets. There was no sound save a whisper of wind as it loitered down the shaggy flanks of Hunter's Peak, and those strange voices which, infinitely distant, seem to be the communications of spirits that tenant the lonely places of the earth.

Ahjeek rested, his black eyes cloudy with intense thought, his smooth face without line or expression. There was in all this something that appealed amazingly to his untamed soul. From hundreds of miles across the prairie this fool of a white man had marched into his very arms. He was a trooper, that was true, but so far Ahjeek, such was his skill in deception, had had no difficulty in dealing with troopers. It began to appear that this was his opportunity to close his career with utter contentment, and slip down to the boundary and across into a country where he reckoned troopers would bother him no longer.

"My friend has said that he would speak with me," he began coolly, and at his words a sigh ran round the copper-coloured circle.

"I have come a long way to speak," said Jock, "and my words are slow because the Blackfoot tongue is hard for my mouth."

"My friend is a wise man," answered Ahjeek; "his tongue is clever. Speak—I have ears."

"A word came to the chief of the troopers at Fort McMurray from our friends the Piegans in the Smoky River country that many horses had been lost. They thought also that perhaps the men of Ahjeek had found them. This is the thing that the chief of the troopers told me, and I, his servant, bring it to you."

"I had not known there were Piegans on the Smoky River," said Ahjeek, with the ghost of a smile, "and why should the men of my tribe find the horses? Are there not Crees and Yellowknives between Hunter's Peak and Fort McMurray? My friend has come too far with a foolish question."

"It is not the habit of the men who wear my coat to ask foolish questions. Perhaps my brother does not understand?"

"Have I not said that my friend's tongue is clever?" replied Ahjeek. "And is he not strong as well? There are not many who can carry a sick man thirty miles, and not open his wound."

"But of the horses of the Piegans my brother has not heard? I thought perhaps that the bird which flies by night might have whispered in his ear where the horses are, and that he would lend me his braves to drive them home again."

Again Ahjeek smiled. "The white man has strange dreams. Perhaps he, too, is sick."

A curious grunt ran around the circle. Every word was being caught by the fighting men, weighed, balanced, and endowed with its own particular meaning. They knew now that Ahjeek was slowly coming round to the thing that lay in the back of his cruel brain. Sixty pairs of beady eyes peered through narrow lids at Trooper MacTier, while sixty merciless brains calculated how long that gigantic frame would withstand the horrors they had designed for it. It was agreed in camp that the women should do the torturing. In such affairs their touch was the more artistic.

But in the very moment in which he was encircled by these devilish intentions, it came to Jock very quietly and very mysteriously that neither he nor Munroe was

meant to die just yet. Why he felt this it was impossible to explain, nor did he ever imagine that it was just one of those baffling communications which destiny vouchsafes to the minds of men in moments when reason and life are in the balance.

"I am not sick," he said evenly, "nor have I the thoughts of a sick man. Ahjeek is perhaps forgetful and does not remember how a certain chief of the Yellowknives, who forgot many things about horses, remembered them suddenly when it was too late." He leaned forward. "I speak a true word, Ahjeek."

The lips of the Blackfoot twitched ever so slightly. "It is well that my brother speaks while there is time."

At this Jock nodded as though it aroused other memories. "Can my brother remember when the troopers of the king that lives across the bitter water grew weary in their questions or their running to and fro? It is not long"—here he waved a hand toward the far-stretching plain—"since the buffalo covered the country like a black blanket, and the lodges of my brothers were pitched wherever there was sweet grass and water for their horses. To-day the buffalo have gone like a tale that is told, and only sometimes in a journey does one find the lodges of the Blackfeet. In their place have come the wagons of the white men with strange customs and a strange tongue. My brother, perhaps, has seen this?" He paused and glanced shrewdly into Ahjeek's face.

The Blackfoot did not stir, but his eyes had taken on a new intensity as he, too, peered at the horizon. "So far it is truth. What then?" he demanded.

"With the white man came a new law," went on Trooper MacTier, with deepening voice, "the law that is the same for all prairie people, whether they be white or red. It has been carried north to the place where the bitter waters turn into stone in winter-time, and south to the country of the Longknives. This law has many servants, and from it there is no escape. It has happened that some men with black hearts, who were also fools, have tortured and slain the servants of the king and of the law, and, being like children, thought they could run away and hide. But," concluded Jock, his eyes hardening, "they only ran like a child, and not far. I have spoken."

Ahjeek's brown hand was slowly raised and laid for an instant against his smooth cheek, at which a whisper ran like the wind

round the circle of fighting men. The copper-coloured shoulders stiffened a little, and the lean bodies bent intently forward. Noting this, Jock's heart quickened in his breast. For a fraction of a second he hesitated, then, lifting his great bulk, walked deliberately out toward the edge of the circle. Ahjeek and sixty others stared at him curiously and with just such eyes as those which regard the caged animal twisting ceaselessly behind his iron bars.

"What is it?" asked Ahjeek coldly. "Is the white man afraid?"

For answer Jock stooped and, with inconceivable swiftness, jerked the gaudy blanket from the knees of the fighting man nearest him. Underneath, resting on the crossed legs, lay a short carbine, the sawed-off rifle of the buffalo hunter. So quickly was it done that the grim ranks sat as though petrified. A silence followed, in which the trooper laughed shortly and squatted once more in the centre of the grassy plot.

"You are answered, Ahjeek," he said coldly. "Once more I ask: Will you return the horses of the Piegans? They are not far away."

Ahjeek laughed out. "Your words are the words of a man who has lost his reason. Is this the end of my friend's message?"

Again Jock shook his head. "I would that you looked into my eyes, Ahjeek."

The Blackfoot stared, and as Jock caught the beady pupils of those cold, black orbs, he flung into his returning gaze the whole strength of his being. There streamed from him an imperious command that slowly began to pierce that cruel exterior. So dominant was this trooper, so poised and concentrated his superb determination, that before its visual expression Ahjeek for the very first time quailed and shrank. This contest was remote from anything on which he had ever reckoned. Gradually there slipped from his sight the ring of fighting men, the pointed lodges, the great bulk of Hunter's Peak itself, till there remained only the consciousness of two grey pinpoints of light that were boring steadily into his very soul. Then there came to him the voice of Trooper MacTier:

"My throat, Ahjeek! Look at my throat!"

The Blackfoot's eyes shifted, as though mesmerised, to the top button of the scarlet tunic. What was there, he dumbly wondered, about that particular button?

"My breast, Ahjeek! Look at my breast!" The voice, imperious and insistent, seemed to drift out of the very heart of the hills. Again the eyes drooped to the broad expanse of the trooper's massive chest.

"My pocket, Ahjeek! Look at my pocket!"

For the third time the black eyes shifted, and as they rested on the corner of the tunic pocket a chill spread slowly through the hot blood that up to this instant had pulsed so triumphantly. From that corner there projected very slightly a small ring of blue-grey steel. Behind this, an inch of shimmering metal melted into MacTier's mighty grip. So fascinating was it, so charged with significant power, that for the very first time that day Ahjeek's lips moved without words. A thousand voices were shouting at him that his life swayed in the balance. The trooper had not stirred, and now his voice came in again, cold as death itself:

"It is not well that my brother should move even his finger. If he is indeed wise—and many men have told me of his wisdom—he will say nothing until he has heard the last word of the law of the prairie. It is not good that any man should die while he is yet young, and his eye bright, and his knees strong, but the law is greater than life. It does not matter if I myself should not any more see the sun, for behind me there will come others, and yet others, and so long as water runs from Hunter's Peak to the Peace River there will be found men who will speak for the law. Think, Ahjeek, there is no place on the mountain or on the prairie which can hide you. There is no man that may give you shelter and find sleep for himself, unless," he added quietly, "the horses of the Piegans are found, and Ahjeek thinks well to ride with me to the chief of the troopers and lay his hand in the chief's hand and swear by his fathers to obey the law. I have spoken."

Once more there fell silence. The fighting men had turned into graven images, and seemed to be a part of the very earth itself. Munroe, waking from his uneasy sleep, had gained the door of his tepee, and was staring at the two with pain-racked gaze. Jock dared scarcely to breathe while the pendulum of life quivered ere it swung. Then, jerkily, Ahjeek's voice sounded again, ragged with uncertainty, and as he spoke a thrill ran through Trooper MacTier.

"And if I do this thing?"

"There will be good-will between the Blackfeet and the Piegans, and your tribe will grow stronger. You will be friends with all men, and with the Piegans there will be hunting and feasting and giving in marriage. Your young braves will not look behind them while they journey, and your old men will sit in comfort in their lodges and tell tales of Ahjeek, the chief, who, remembering many things, learned the wisdom of the law that knows no change. I have spoken."

For a full minute Ahjeek waited till, with nerve-shaking slowness, his two hands came out, palms up, and stretched gradually towards Trooper MacTier. It was the peace sign of the prairie, the symbol of the open heart and the friend, the sign-manual known from Coronation Gulf to the Yellowstone, to break which was a thing for ever damned and despicable. Even Ahjeek, however double-faced, would never dare to misuse this ancient and universal token.

"It is well said," he answered under his breath; "the horses of the Piegans shall be found, and I will journey beside you."

And so it was. Once again out of the depths of danger and despair the great heart of Jock MacTier had lifted itself triumphantly.

Now, of what followed during the next few days, of the rapid healing of Munroe's wound, of the feasting, hunting, and sleeping, of the tales that were repeated in the lodges of Ahjeek's camp, of the sudden and marvellous appearance of the Piegan horses, fat as butter, and herded by a dozen fighting men, it is not necessary to write; but of the talks between Ahjeek and Trooper MacTier, during which a new interpretation of the white man's law drifted into that copper-covered soul, it may be well to speak.

Through them all Jock was chiefly conscious that he was dealing with a man whose ancestry was immeasurably ancient, reaching far back through countless years in which these dusky tribes roamed the prairie, free as air and kings of all that they beheld. With this large in his mind, Jock understood the fierce resentment that burned in Ahjeek's breast at the ceaseless encroachment of his territory. It was true, too, that what the Indian had learned from the white man was mostly not to the credit of either. How natural it was that he should discern in trapper, trader, and explorer only those who wanted some-

thing for nothing, and who plunged carelessly ahead, however they might violate that most dear to the free peoples of the West. Ahjeek was, as well, curiously like a child. He responded to childish arguments, was moved by things simple and elemental, and was puzzled over much that had drummed itself into the white man's brain.

So it happened that in these talks Trooper MacTier betrayed a high and noble interpretation of his duty. Gently, but with unvarying firmness, he brought Ahjeek to admit that the way of the transgressor is, even on the slopes of the Rockies, a way of discomfort and unending anxiety. Thus it was that a fortnight later they set their faces toward the east and began the return patrol.

It was a curious journey, during which Ahjeek, moved by strange admiration of this incomprehensible trooper, initiated him into many things that were hidden from most white men. Night after night they camped on the flower-strewn earth, while over them lifted the vast canopy of sky, jewelled with stars, tender with the whispers of wandering winds.

Jock's report was, like all the Mounted Police records, brief to a degree—so brief that it is worth repeating:

"According to instructions, Troopers MacTier and Munroe proceeded on a patrol from Fort McMurray to Hunter's Peak on the slopes of the Rockies. Trooper MacTier was in charge. The purpose of the patrol was to recover certain horses said to have been stolen by Ahjeek the Blackfoot from the Piegans, in the territory between Wapiti and Smoky Rivers. Leaving Fort McMurray on August the fifth, the patrol arrived at the Piegan camp on August the twenty-fifth, where details of the horses were procured. Continuing thence the following day, the patrol entered Ahjeek's camp on September the third, Trooper Munroe having in the meantime been shot through the shoulder from ambush.

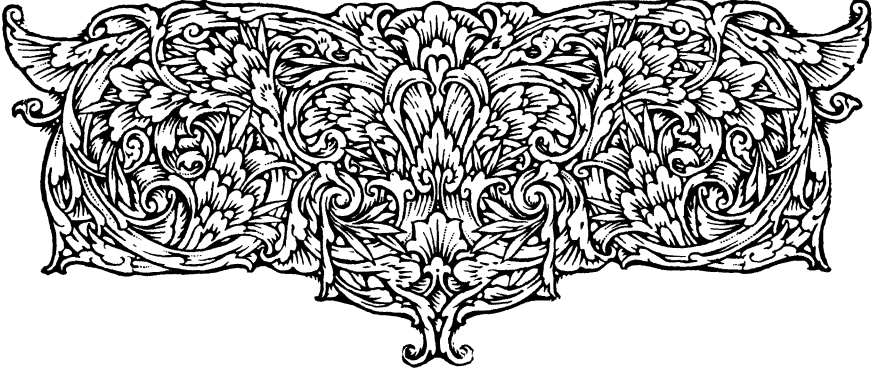
"Ahjeek the Blackfoot was induced to return the stolen property, with which, in company with Troopers MacTier and Munroe, he arrived at the Piegan camp two weeks later. Proceeding thence, the patrol reached Fort McMurray on October the fifth, Trooper Munroe being by that time completely recovered."

To this was subjoined a memorandum signed by the Inspector:

"Trooper MacTier has since the above date been promoted to sergeant."

That is all there was to it, except that Munroe, however Jock imposed silence upon him, could not remain entirely voiceless. As for Jock himself, he consistently refused to say anything, except that once, when driven into a corner by an insistent and

admiring questioner, he got very red in the face and, in evident and extreme discomfort, blurted: "Man, man, can ye no hold your jaw? 'Twas nothing at all, and whatever it might be 'twas for the honour of the force."



A SANCTUARY IN AIR.

YOUR house was on the green—

Very neat, very clean,
White fence, white door, and a garden in between:
A little garden, gay
With all the flowers of May,
And, high up, your window gleaming when your lover passed that way.

They have pulled down the house
Where we made our first love vows,
They've cut down the mock orange and the scented lilac boughs;
Just allotments—not a tree
Where your garden used to be,
With its flowers that were picked by me and you—for you and me.

And the world's grown cold,
Very heavy, very old;
There are no flowers or letters now worth while to throw or hold;
And never a window bright
With the magic magnet light
That draws a man from miles away to worship it at night.

And the room where once you were
Is an unseen square
In the wonder of the starlit sky and empty blue air . . .
But still, when I pass,
I see the glint of glass,
And the white words that you used to throw to the boy that once I was.

E. NESBIT.

"TWICE TIMES SIX"

By GWYNETH M. STARR

ILLUSTRATED BY LILIAN HOCKNELL

"MUMMIE doesn't let *me* play in the park."

Dickie looked a little non-plussed.

"Why not?" said he.

Patricia edged a little nearer, her red-gold curls pressed close against the railings.

"Oh, I don't know!" she said vaguely.

"Mummie says I can *walk* in the park with Nurse, but I must *play* in our garden."

Dickie gazed respectfully at the pleasant vista of garden seen through the gateway in an inner hedge.

"P'raps it's 'cos yours is so big," he ventured. "Ours isn't very, an' it's always full of the babies."

"Babies!" gasped Patricia in amazement. "How many babies have you got?"

"Two," said Dickie soberly. "One lies on the rug and one's in the pram under the tree. But they've got to go to sleep in the mornin's, and mother says I make a noise and wake them, so I come in the park. Why don't *you* come in the park?"

"Mummie says I mustn't play there," repeated Patricia primly. Then, curiosity getting the upper hand: "What d'you play at?"

"Steam-engines," said Dickie, "and air-planes, and wild horses—and ships"—after a pause. "I play ships when it rains."

"But you can't sail ships—there isn't any water," scoffed Patricia.

"There's *puddles* when it's wet," replied Dickie, "and I can make paper boats, I can. And my brother gave me a teeny-weeny little wooden one. But that one goes down, so I've got to hold it up on a piece of string."

Patricia gave a little envious wriggle. If only Mummie would let her go in the park to play with this friendly little boy who could sail ships in puddles! She pressed her little face between the railings, and a rusty smudge appeared on the flushed cheeks.

"If I come an' play with you one day, can I sail the ship?" she coaxed.

Dickie nodded his round, dark head.

"Yes," he said, "and I'll make you a paper one, all your own, too, if you like."

Patricia smiled at him.

"Then I'll come," she said graciously. "I'll ask Mummie."

A pause fell between them. Presently Patricia said:

"What's your name, little boy?"

"Richard Arnold Jefferies. What's yours?"

"Patricia Mary Deane. How old are you? I'm nearly six."

"I'm six."

"Well, I'm going to be six. I'm going to have a birthday, and then I shall be six. And I'm going to have a party on my birthday. It isn't *next* Tuesday, *nor* the next Tuesday, but the next Tuesday, Nurse says."

"Oh," said Dickie, obviously impressed. He kicked at a pebble with a very dusty little shoe.

"I'm going to ask *you* to my party now," chirped Patricia sweetly.

"Oh," said Dickie again. There seemed nothing else to say.

Another pause. Then a sweet, rather high-pitched voice:

"Patricia, dear!"

"That's Nurse," said Patricia, with a swift, backward glance at her home. "Good-bye. I'm going to ask Mummie to let me come."

She turned and fled along the wide gravelled path, her curls bobbing, her short blue skirts flying in the wind. Dickie turned away and trotted home.

* * * * *

"But, Nurse, he was a *dear* little boy, and he's as big as me, and he makes boats, he says, and I *am* going to ask Mummie."

"Yes, yes, darling, you shall. But it was naughty to run out to those railings and talk such a long time to a strange little boy. Mummie wouldn't like it, you know."

"Well, he *was* a nice little boy, and his name's Richard. And we can go in the park

in the morning, can't we, and see if he's there, can't we? Oh, can't we?"

"We'll see," temporised Nurse, as she tied Patricia's ribbon. Later on she remarked to Mrs. Deane: "I think he must be the little boy from the house at the corner of the square. A Mr. Jefferies lives there. I think he is a dentist, and they have two tiny children and some older ones who go to school."

"Well, we must find out," said Patricia's mother, "and if he is a nice, well-mannered child, there is no reason why he should not come in and play with Pat now and then. She has never shown any particular interest in other children before, has she?"

"Not that I remember," said Nurse Douglas. "It would be a very good thing for the child—she is inclined to be too dreamy."

So inquiries were made, and it was discovered that although Richard Arnold Jefferies' sailor suit was woefully shabby, Richard Arnold Jefferies' manners were those of the average well-brought-up boy of six, and that was all. Patricia's mother and Patricia's highly-trained nursery college nurse asked for their charge. And Dickie joined Pat in her walks in the park, and sometimes came into Pat's mother's beautiful old garden. Pat learned to play steam-engines and airplanes—which games necessitated much puffing and blowing, and arm-waving and running wildly up and down—and also was taught to manufacture paper boats. Mummie preferred them to sail one in a big tin bath in the garden, and this, of course, was joy. But no boat that Patricia ever sailed gave her quite such enjoyment as the one she sailed in the biggest park puddle one grey afternoon a few days later, even though she fell into the puddle herself at the close of the performance, and was carried home a bundle of tears and mud.

Then one morning Dickie appeared with an "airplane"—a wonderful contrivance of cardboard and cotton and cotton reels and match sticks. The only drawback was that it wouldn't fly; but, as Dickie explained to Patricia, when he was a man he was going to have a "really" one that would fly higher than anyone else's, Patricia overlooked this obvious defect.

So much enjoyment did she derive from the "airplane" that Dickie was fired with a desire to make one for her. Perhaps he could make an extra specially nice one for her birthday, and take it when he went to

the party. It was Wednesday, and the birthday was now only six days distant. He grinned cheerfully all over his face, and suddenly said—

"I've got a secret, Pat—an awful nice one—but I can't tell you."

"Oh, all right," said Patricia, just a little huffy.

That afternoon, however, Dickie's face told a different tale.

"Mother's cross about my airplane" he said soberly. "She says I oughtn't to have taken her best cotton to do it, 'cos it's ninepence now, an' I can't give it her back, 'cos it's all tangled."

"Oh, well, Mummie's got lots of cottons and silks," said Patricia loftily. The prices of such ordinary articles as reels of cotton were evidently not mentioned in Patricia's *ménage*.

Dickie reflected sadly that Patricia's Mummie always seemed to have lots of everything, and it was really discouraging. But then Patricia's Mummie hadn't babies to buy things for, and Dickie's mother had told him babies want so *many* things.

"Oh, it's all right," he said hastily, "I—I won't have any of yours, thank you. This cotton is really *quite* nice, only Mother says I oughtn't to have had it."

Retribution followed shortly, for the cotton proved to be very fine, and before the afternoon was over it had broken in many places. Dickie felt very sad as he walked home. Perhaps he could ask one of his older sisters; but no, they would want to know why he wanted it, and he knew they would not see the importance of his aeroplane.

Then the wonderful thing happened. Mother met him with a smile.

"Uncle Howard's been. I wish you had been in sooner, sonny. He did want to see you. He's brought some lovely sweets for the babies, and there's a shilling each for all the rest of you."

Exactly one hour later Richard Arnold presented himself at one of the numerous counters at Messrs. Wilkins and Trevor, drapers.

"I want, if you please," he began in a polite treble, "I want a *nice* reel of black cotton."

"What number?" said the young woman he addressed.

Dickie was taken aback. He did not know reels of cotton had numbers. He paused.

"Did your mother say what number she wanted, dear?"

The "dear" made Dickie feel terribly young. He summoned up all the dignity he could muster.

"I think, perhaps, fifteen," he hazarded. The girl laughed.

"Fifty, she meant, dear, I expect," said she, and hurried away in search of it.

from dead matches and bits of wire. Best of all, the propeller was secured by an elastic band bestowed on Dickie by big brother Jack, in a sudden outburst of generosity. By releasing the elastic coils, you could make the propeller fly round and round. Frequently it fell off, but you could



"Pat was taught to manufacture paper boats."

It was finished, and it was a most beautiful aeroplane. One wing was cut from an old candle-box, and the other from a starch-box. The cotton was crossed and recrossed in marvellous fashion, and there were wonderful bits of mechanism constructed

put it on again "just as easy as easy." (Dickie's forefingers were very sore indeed by now.) And now it was safely stowed away in an old boot-box, where no one could find it, and it was Monday night, and Dickie's new suit was being tried on. Mother

had said he *must* have a new suit, if she had to go without everything herself for a year. For really how could he go to the Deanes' house—the Deanes' house, of all people's!—looking just anyhow? So Dickie allowed himself to be put into the new suit and duly admired, without any particular show of interest. He could play games *just* as well in his old one, and of course there would be lots of games. Patricia said so, and what Patricia said was law.

The blow fell as Mother smoothed down his collar.

"And Daddy is going to try and find a nice picture-book for you to take to give to Patricia," she said. "All the little boys and girls will be taking something, I expect, and Daddy thinks you had better take a picture-book."

"But—I've made her an *airplane*," burst out Dickie. "I've made it all my own self, an' I'm going to give her that. I've got it all ready."

"Well, darling, you shall take that in the park with her next time. But to-morrow she'd like the picture-book best—it's her birthday, you know."

Dickie was silent. Mother's hands continued to smooth down his collar.

"You see, dear, an aeroplane like that is more for out-of-doors, isn't it? And—and—well, at a party it's better to take something like—well, a picture-book."

Her glance wavered before the look in Dickie's eyes.

"But I made it for her," said Dickie. "It took all a starch-box and a candle-box, and the cotton I bought, and Jack's elastic—it's a lovely one. I'll show you!"

He darted away and presently returned with the boot-box. The wonderful aeroplane was lifted out for inspection. Mother looked at it respectfully. It certainly *was* ingenious and well-made for a little boy of six, but— It was all too obvious that it *was* made of a starch-box and a candle-box, and the cotton Dickie bought, and Jack's elastic. And all Patricia's other little friends—well, they were all children from the Square. If you knew the Square, you would know what that meant. And when Dickie appeared among them with that— Dickie's mother looked at Dickie. He stood there, his head thrown back, a whole world of eagerness in his little face, and she knew her thoughts were unworthy ones, in the face of that shining child-look, so she put the lid of the box down gently, and said—

"It's a lovely one, Dickie, and Pat will love it! You'll take the picture-book, too, won't you? Because Daddy is getting it specially for Pat."

"Oh, yes! Won't she be pleased?" said Dickie happily, as he carried the boot-box away.

* * * *

There was a Teddy-bear nearly as big as herself, a little motor-car that had *real* tyres, a doll that talked and another one that didn't, a tea-set from Aunt Eleanor, and a doll's pram from Uncle Fred, and—oh, more than Patricia could count; and all the boys and girls who were coming into the big drawing-room were bringing mechanical toys and books and chocolates, and wonderful surprises of all kinds. Patricia, in a little frock of cloudy white, an enormous white bow on her curls, was almost beside herself.

"Look, Mummie!" she called excitedly. "Look, Daddy!"

Patricia's Mummie and Daddy, and two or three grown-up aunts in wonderful frocks, hovered round in the beautiful flower-bedecked room. The little guests pattered shyly across the polished floor to their small hostess, who stood near the big fireplace, where a log-wood fire burnt merrily, for the autumn day was drawing in.

At length Dickie arrived, very calm and grave, with the newest of new suits and the smoothest of little dark heads. In his right hand he carried a big flat parcel, and under his arm a boot-box. Straight to Patricia he went, a smile flickering in his grave, blue eyes.

"I've come, Pat," he said, "and Mother sent you this—it's a picture-book. And I've brought you *this*!" The last sentence had a trumpet sound about it. Grown-up fingers untied the string, and Patricia uncovered the picture-book. Patricia smiled.

"Say 'Thank you,' darling," came a maternal whisper.

"Thank you," said Patricia shyly.

Then the boot-box was opened. Dickie's fingers shook a little as he offered it. Patricia gave a squeal of joy.

"Oh, it's a lovely airplane, like yours, Dickie! Oh, I *like* it!"

"I made it all for you," said Dickie, flushed with pride, "an' the propeller goes round, and all."

He showed her just how it worked. The other little guests crowded round. The grown-ups caught one another's eyes as

"Best Sperm" came into view on the upper wing. Away went the elastic, round went the propeller, whizzing merrily. Dickie replaced the elastic and repeated the performance. This time the propeller flew off into the fender. An aunt retrieved it and gave it back to Dickie, who thanked her solemnly.

"It does that," he explained, "but you can always put it on again."

Patricia skipped up and down, all the curls a-bobbing.

"It's beautiful," she said. "Thank you, Dickie!"

Impulsively she stretched up both arms round Dickie's neck and kissed him. Dickie wriggled himself free a little shamefacedly. Of course Patricia was a girl, and girls *did* kiss, and one had to let them sometimes, but— At this point the propeller fell off again.

* * * * *

At eight o'clock all the guests, including one very happy, triumphant small boy, had gone, and Nurse appeared to take a weary Patricia to bed. The drawing-room was a scene of desolation—fragments of crackers, balls and books and toys lay scattered about. The bigger presents, like the pram and the Teddy-bear, were piled up in a corner. The aunts had gone, and Mummie and Daddy stood by the fireplace. Patricia groped among the presents.

"What is it, darling?" said Nurse. "Is it one of the dollies you want?"

"No," said Patricia, with the slight peevishness of overtired youth. "I don't want a dolly. I don't want anything but my nice new airplane. I'm going to take it to bed."

"But, dearie, you can't—" began Nurse.

Patricia had found her aeroplane.

"Yes, I can," she interrupted. "I'm going to. If it won't go inside, I'm going to have it on the chair by the side of me."

She said good-night to her parents, both arms clasped round her treasure, her chin resting on "Best Sperm."

"Strange," said Pat's Daddy, "a kiddie will pass by all the most expensive toys for the simplest thing of the bunch. Which present did you like best, Patsy?"

"My airplane," said his daughter tranquilly.

"Why, darling?"

Patricia was too sleepy almost to give a reason.

"Dickie made it for me, all his own self," said she.

Patricia's Mummie smiled, and Patricia's Daddy said something about the "eternal feminine," but Pat heeded them not. The aeroplane safely clasped in her arms, she trotted upstairs to bed.

IN THE TRADES.

HO, let her rip, with her royal clew a-quiver,
And the long miles reeling out behind!
For the Trade's got a hold of her, and every rope's a-shiver
With the strong and steady urging of the wind.

All the gleaming white of her, all the sun and shade,
Leaning, swaying to the seas—
All up the height of her the South-east Trade
Humming like a swarm of bees!

Underneath the heel of her the white wake flying,
Tumbled and trampled into snow;
Down below the keel of her the lost ships lying
In the weed and the coral far below!

C. FOX SMITH.

A TELLER OF TALES

By PHILIPPA SOUTHCOMBE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

SHE paused on the threshold just long enough for the man to remember that they had met before. That the when and where of that occasion were not immediately apparent was not of paramount importance. She came across to him, with her hand held out in a frank welcome that was echoed in the glance of her very direct and lovely grey eyes, and her voice held a welcome, too.

"I'm so glad you could come, after all. Uncle Charles was afraid you wouldn't. We are so far away here." She smiled. "Twelve miles from—anywhere."

"You are very delightful here," he said gravely, and there was a sincerity in his glance that made of the words no idle pleasantries, for it took in, it would seem, the whole setting of the dim panelled room, the flickering of the wood fire warming the February twilight that, beyond the wide-open French windows, showed a sky of cold grey and silver above the rough bracken-covered hills, between which and the house was but a stretch of tangled shrubbery.

And it came to rest on the girl herself—a figure strangely in keeping with it all, her grey frock and the armful of Japanese plum branches she had brought in—bronze and pearl—her crown of soft *cendré* hair that matched the gathering shadows.

"I suppose twelve miles in England is a bit remote. But, you see, I meant to come."

"Then please sit down," she said, "and tell me all about Roger."

He took the chair she indicated, and she seated herself opposite him, her eyes on his face, like those of a child awaiting a story. To Piers Hawtrey then the room seemed very still, as though that, too, waited—waited for him to tell "all about Roger." And as his instinctive pause grew to be

a silence, he saw the colour slip out of her face.

"Major Hawtrey, Roger's—all right?"

"Quite all right."

His steady voice was reassuring. She smiled relievedly.

"How long ago was it that you saw him?"

"How long? Oh, let's see. About four weeks—no, five."

She nodded seriously.

"I s'pose it would be that. It takes three weeks—the voyage home, doesn't it? And then he's five days up country. He hasn't written quite lately, or perhaps the letters got lost. I think he'd be sure to tell me you were coming. Or—or he may be too busy to write. He—everyone was sure he'd get on splendidly."

"Yes," said Hawtrey.

He saw the faintest shadow cross her face at the brevity of his reply. There was a little pause, fraught, for Hawtrey, with a swift complexity of thought. Then he heard her voice again, holding an odd little note of defiance—

"He's simply certain to get on. He said himself that he *knew* he would. Of course he's not been out there so very long, really—only four years. It—it seems long, of course, to me. But that's partly living here, so—so far away and never seeing anyone."

"Never seeing anyone?"

She laughed at his tone.

"Well, hardly anyone, you know, besides Uncle Charles and the rector, and old Admiral Brownlow and his wife, and the country people. People don't come to Faycombe much, you know; it's too far from anywhere, and even for hunting it's not a convenient centre, like Barnton or Hawford. Roger"—the smile deepened rather charmingly—"Roger only came by chance. He was motoring to some friends

beyond Barnton, and he missed his way and got off the track—someone directed him wrongly—and then the car broke down, and Uncle Charles met him and brought him here to tea, and then——” She broke off with a sudden little laugh. “But of course he’ll have told you all that,” she said.

“Yes,” said Hawtrey again.

“So, you see, it is so splendid to meet someone who has just seen him.”

He looked at her and saw again the face of the child waiting for a story, confident, eager, and that complexity of feeling crystallised into a sudden swift decision. He leaned towards her.

“Roger’s doing splendidly,” he said.

And that was the equivalent of “Once upon a time. . . .”

When, half an hour later, Uncle Charles appeared on the scene, he found a firelit room dedicated to the recital of the triumphs of Roger. For the story, it appeared, had progressed so well that the girl had quite forgotten to light the candles. She sat in the big chair, with her slim hands clasped round her knees, and the branches of plum blossom slipped to the floor at her feet, and no child ever hung upon the words of the most enthralling fairy tale ever told as she on the result of Piers Hawtrey’s decision.

The voice of Uncle Charles broke a tension and a spell, though the girl had only been aware of the latter. Uncle Charles, it appeared, had found in the son of his old friend a sufficiently real interest to rival the two absorbing enthusiasms of his life—the keeping of bees and the writing of a monograph on Graham of Claverhouse—and his welcome was as sincere as his niece’s had been. Perhaps, indeed, it was even more so, for he, at least, did not regard Piers Hawtrey simply as a teller of tales—tales of the triumphs of Roger. He did not mention Roger’s name at all, and Hawtrey, with quickened sympathy, was aware that the subject of Roger was possibly one on which Uncle Charles and his niece did not always think alike.

“Ismay,” said Uncle Charles severely, “should have given you some tea.”

“Oh!” The delinquent started guiltily, glancing at the clock, which announced the time as half-past five. “Oh, I’m so sorry!”

But Hawtrey, whilst assuring her that he didn’t take tea, was vainly pursuing an elusive shred of memory evoked by the sound of the girl’s name—a memory which, strive as he might, he could not grasp. And since to submit to being baffled was not

Piers Hawtrey’s way, he promptly registered a vow that he *would* capture it, if the effort involved remaining at Faycombe for a year.

As a matter of fact, he was putting up at Barnton, the country town twelve miles away; it was there that Uncle Charles, who had driven in on business connected with beehives, had by chance encountered him, and, momentarily forgetting Graham of Claverhouse in the forty-year-old memory of Hawtrey the elder, had extended the invitation to his old friend’s son.

Now, twelve miles of such a road as that between Barnton and Faycombe are twelve miles indeed, and Hawtrey, who had ridden over, had confided to the bay cob, as they slid and scrambled down the fifth steep and stony hill in the watercourse that masqueraded as a road, exactly what he thought about it. On the return journey, which should have invoked more comment—since it had to be made by the uncertain light of the spring moon—the cob simply got good-humoured and rather absent encouragement. And on the following morning, very much to his surprise, and no little disgust, he found himself called upon to accomplish the same journey again. He spent the greater part of that day in a large and somewhat dilapidated stable, where he had for a companion the ancient brown horse that was wont to draw Uncle Charles’s even more ancient equipage.

But Piers Hawtrey spent it in that garden that had no real boundary, but merged by tangled shrubbery into the wilderness of bracken and brambles.

There had been roses planted there in the dim past, and Ismay, hard at work amid a tangle of vigorous unpruned branches, did not hear Hawtrey’s approach until he stood beside her.

“Your uncle is busy with Graham of Claverhouse,” he said, “so I just put Peter in the stable and came to find you.” He looked at her gravely. “Now that I have found you, you’ll let me give you a hand?”

So he gave her a hand—two very ready and capable ones—and then, by some means irrevocable and inexplicable, he took up once more the broken thread of that enthralling story that had for hero—Roger.

* * * * *

It was a story, it would seem, of some length and infinite variety, for it was actually three days later that Ismay interrupted its recital with a sudden question.

"Did Roger ever say anything about coming home?"

Before her direct grey glance he hesitated for the first time.

"I — no — well, he didn't — nothing definite."

"Surely, if he's doing so well with everything, he could take a holiday, after four years."

He said nothing. There had been a new note in her voice, a subtle hardness that jarred. It was the first black thread in the shining web of the fairy tale.

Yet he went on with the telling of it on those occasions during the ensuing weeks when the bay cob slumbered in Uncle Charles's stable.

February slipped into March, and then there came a day when Hawtrey, entering that garden room where the fairy tale had first begun, was confronted by Ismay with an open letter in her hand and that in the expression of her small face that brought him to a halt before her.

She said, without waiting for him to speak—

"I have had a letter from Roger. It is in answer to one I wrote the day after you came. I told him, of course, that you were here, and how glad I was to have heard of him from you. He says that he can't understand it. The only Hawtrey he knows—or has ever met—is the Major Hawtrey who, as he told us then, sailed with him on the *Silver Castle* four years ago, when he first went out, and he has never seen him since. What does it mean?"

He said—

"It means that—Roger's all right, doesn't it? Isn't that all that matters?"

She looked at him curiously, a long, still look.

"It's not like you to—lie. I—I should like to know, have you ever seen Roger's farm in South Africa at all?"

"No."

"Then——"

"You asked me to tell you 'all about Roger,' so I told you."

"Oh!" Her voice was very steady and her face was very white. "Oh, how dared you? All these weeks. . . . You made one see it all—the beginning and the bareness, and the fight against odds, the eternal ploughing, the loneliness and isolation, that awful time when the locusts ate everything, and then the success, how—how he had stuck to it until he won, and how he deserved to win. And all the time you'd never seen

the place! All the time"—her slim hands clenched—"you were thinking what a joke it was!"

"No, it wasn't a joke."

She gave a little angry laugh.

"Then I don't know what it was. I suppose you thought because I lived here, twelve miles from anywhere, and because you and Roger were about the only men I'd ever met——" She broke off suddenly, as if the words had awaked for her a picture, or a comparison, that she had not before realised, and at the look in her great grey eyes Hawtrey took an involuntary step towards her, checking himself with one hand gripping the rail of a high-back chair.

"Listen!" he said sharply. "Listen! When I came that first evening, you took it for granted that I had brought you news of Roger. You only thought of that. You just waited for me to tell you. I don't know why you were so sure I knew——"

"Because," she said dully, "we remembered—Uncle Charles and I—that Roger had mentioned your going out with him on the *Silver Castle*. And Uncle Charles, when he came back after meeting you in Barnton, said no doubt you'd be able to give me news of Roger. So I supposed that you'd spoken of him, to make Uncle Charles think that. And then—and then, instead of being honest with me, you told me—a fairy tale!"

In the long pause that followed came only the patter of a cold spring shower on the leaves without. She did not guess how deep that last shaft went home, for she did not know that, at long last, Piers Hawtrey had captured the elusive memory that had baffled him all those weeks, and, having captured it, was finding it sorry company.

He said at length, very slowly and quietly—

"Heaven knows, it wasn't a joke! And now that Roger has written, and you know he's all right, won't you forget that what I told you was just a fairy tale, and realise that all the time it was true?"

She gave an odd little laugh that held a note quite new to it—a confession, somehow, of half-scornful wonder. And she did not answer his question at all. For a moment he got the memory, poignantly vivid, of that first evening when he had begun the fairy tale, with no more heed to its ending than the immediate satisfying of a pair of very lovely, very anxious grey eyes. It had been a fool's act, and the knowledge of that was all the more bitter because of the realisation, no longer to be denied, that back of that

action had been another reason—a reason only now crystallised into definiteness.

He said doggedly, as if he argued with her—

“You know, it need not matter—my part in it—since it is true.”

She gave him a long, deliberate look, then her glance went back to the crumpled letter in her hand.

“No, it need not matter,” she echoed quietly.

And that, it appeared, was to be the end of the fairy tale, for, beyond a conventional leave-taking, Piers Hawtreys and the girl

And Hawtreys, looking at her squarely, said—

“So am I.”

“You?” It was a little startled exclamation. “Oh, but why?”

He did not answer that. For he did not intend to tell her that it was because he meant to find out how much—or how little—of that fairy tale was true; that, having remembered at last, he was only too sure that the “little” would be the more probable; and that, with that conviction, he had one aim—to make it come true somehow.



“So, you see, it is so splendid to meet someone who has just seen him.” He looked at her and saw again the face of the child waiting for a story, confident, eager.”

had no more to say. The bay cob negotiated the twelve miles of ruts and stones for the last time, and his rider left Barnton that same evening.

* * * * *

Less than a month later Hawtreys stood on the deck of an outward-bound liner, and stared in dumb incredulity at the girl he had last seen on that cold spring morning in Uncle Charles’s morning-room.

She did not offer him her hand, but she said quickly, as if she did not want him to ask an explanation—

“I am going out to—Roger.”

“Roger is to meet me at Cape Town,” she said simply. “We shall be married there.”

“He cabled you after I left?”

She shook her head, the colour suddenly deepening in her uplifted face.

“No, he wrote. It was the letter—I had—that morning.”

“And you did not tell me,” said Hawtreys slowly. He said it without bitterness or resentment, yet it would seem that she discerned something of both, for she said, with real regret—

“No. I wished I had—afterwards.”

And once again Hawtrey did not answer her. So she did not guess how fervently he echoed her wish, for had she told him then, he would have had a clear three weeks' start—three weeks wherein to achieve that end for which he would now have no time at all.

There was a long pause, fraught for both of them by an odd sense of tension. Something hard and dogged and grim was in Hawtrey's face: he was thinking of that memory that had evaded him so long—the memory of that first time he had seen Ismay's face two years ago, a delicately tinted miniature that had fallen from the pocket of the man injured in a raid on a gaming-house in the worst quarter of Cape Town. The man had tried to escape, had been pursued by the police, and, firing at his pursuers, had been wounded by their return fire, and in the struggle that had taken place a few yards in front of Hawtrey's rickshaw, the miniature had fallen from his pocket. Hawtrey had picked it up, and, looking from the delicate loveliness of the painted face to the far from pleasant countenance of the young man, had hesitated, loth to return it. Vividly now he remembered that moment of hesitation, and its passing. He had returned the miniature, conscious that he would never forget the face portrayed. He had not forgotten it, yet, by some odd trick of memory, his meeting with the portrait's original had at first failed to connect the two events until it was too late.

Out of his reflection he heard Ismay's voice—

"You know, I am glad you are coming, too."

And her grey eyes told him that behind the quiet simplicity of the words was something more—a question—or perhaps an answer to one—that decided his course of action once for all.

* * * * *

After that first day they saw very little of one another—an arrangement that, it would seem, was contrived by both, and one which attracted no particular comment, for Hawtrey was essentially a man's man, and had found an old acquaintance in a

prominent official of the Cape Town Police, who chanced to be on board.

From Madeira he sent a cable, and a fortnight later, with Table Mountain sighted and the journey's end a matter of hours, he received a wireless message that set his mouth in grim lines. He found Ismay on deck and alone.

She glanced at him and away, and she did not wait for him to speak. Perhaps she was afraid of what he would say.

"I wanted to say good-bye to you," she told him. "You see, I have—have changed my plans. I am going on to Durban with the Connors."

He stared at her, for a moment forgetting the message on the paper he still had crumpled up in his clenched hand.

"To Durban?" he echoed.

"Yes." Suddenly she faced him, her eyes steady as his. "I've written to Roger and told him—and told him that I can't. I had to. It—wouldn't have been fair to him. You see, when it came to the point, I found that it didn't matter whether the fairy tale were true or not. I—ought to have found out before." She paused, then, with his hands gripping her shoulders, she added seriously: "I think it must be that I have—grown too old for fairy tales. . . ."

Perhaps she had. For what he told her then was the truth, and she found it good. She said, some time later, with a little puzzled frown—

"You know, I don't think somehow that Roger will mind so very much."

And Hawtrey made no reply. She could not guess that the coded message on the paper in his hand was proof indeed of Roger's capacity for "minding very much." Inquiries made in a reliable quarter had elicited the facts that put him for ever without the pale. That such a man should have dared to think of marrying Ismay sent the blood into Hawtrey's face and made him clench his hands.

Yet, since the fairy tale had lost its power to charm, she need never know the worst. Hawtrey tore the slip of paper into shreds and let them flutter over the rail.

And then he told her once more the story that was quite true.





THE BETTER WAY.

QUIVERFUL: Look here, Mallet, I wish you'd come round to-morrow and fix up my piano.
 MALLET: Pianner, sir? I be a carpenter, not a pianner-tooner.
 QUIVERFUL: That's all right—I simply want you to come and screw the lid down!

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

I GO BARGAIN-HUNTING.

By Herbert Strudwick.

DULCIE is down with the "flu." Her campaign at the sales has come to an untimely end. For days she has been hunting for the ideal chintz, and only yesterday saw it.

What could she do about it now that she was laid up? Should some other woman secure the prize that Dulcie had discovered after such diligent search? Not if I knew it! Fortunately she had got a pattern, and all I had to do was to fetch the chintz. It sounded simple enough, and so, in all the innocence of my early manhood, I sallied forth to my first sale.

Collecting all my available cash, I took a taxi down to Kensington High Street. In my ignorance I told the driver to await my return. I realise now that for the return journey an ambulance would have been more suitable.

Having once got inside the shop, I despaired of ever getting out again. I found myself

battling against a sea of frenzied females. One hears a lot about the two million surplus women. Well, they were all there, and I appeared to be grappling with the lot.

I was caught up in the stream of femininity which surged and eddied round the various counters. As I was swept along on the crest of the tide, I clutched in desperation at a guardian policeman, but missed him by an inch. The next moment I was engulfed in the swirling torrent which poured into the Super-Bargain Basement.

I shall never forget that seething cauldron—a veritable maelstrom.

Obviously it was a case of *sauf qui peut*, and so I struck out for the nearest counter. There I made my first purchase. It was a thrilling moment, and took the form of a bacon slicer. Probably it was rather an extravagance, as neither Dulcie nor I eat bacon; but the girl who was demonstrating said that no home was complete without it, and—well, there you are! Besides, she was rather nice, with a topping dimple. I thought

Dulcie would be pleased with it—the bacon slicer, I mean.

Then I got a ripping golf jacket. I didn't really want another, but the man said it was just what I was looking for, and of course it's his job to know. Then I found a wonderful line in doormats. By taking a dozen there appeared to be a great saving. There being only one entrance to the flat, I am a little hazy as to where we are going to put them all, but the fellow insisted that they were sure to come in handy somewhere about the place. He suggested penwipers!

By this time I had fairly got into the spirit of the thing, and my bargain-hunting blood was up. I bought with abandon.

all we required was enough to cover one large settee and two armchairs.

We were on the point of measuring it out, when the large and overpowering one descended again upon me and tried to snatch the chintz from under my very nose.

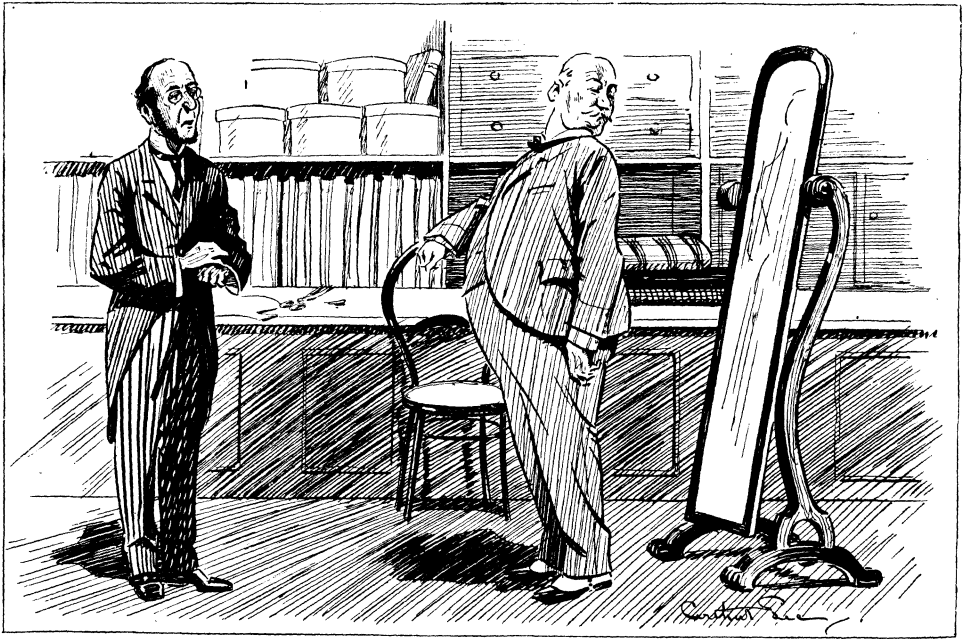
"Pardon me, madam," I protested, "but that is mine."

"I got it first," she screamed, appealing to the salesman," and I must have ten yards!"

Nothing daunted, I "doubled" her.

She tore wildly at the chintz. "Then I'll have twenty, too!" she yelled, shaking her free fist in my face.

With all the desperate recklessness of the



FIXING THE RESPONSIBILITY.

"I don't care much for these trousers, Jenks. They seem to go all in rucks at the back of the leg."

"Oh, our trousers would never do that, sir. It must be your skin!"

Tussles were many, and included one particularly violent altercation with a large and overpowering female whose sole occupation appeared to be snatching at anything anyone else wanted. Probably you have met her yourself.

At last, however, I reached the comparative calm of the furnishing department. Here the pressure was less severe, and I was able to start hunting around with my precious pattern. As luck would have it, a salesman came to my rescue, and, recognising the chintz, produced it forthwith.

"How much do you want?" he inquired.

Unfortunately, I had not thought to ask Dulcie before I started, but I explained that

born gambler, I went the whole hog. "I'll take the bale!" I said.

"Fifty yards!" said the salesman in astonishment.

"Yes, the whole bale!" I said, with a triumphant glance at my rival. "And if there's any more, I'll take that, too!" I hissed.

* * * *

It is true that I won, but even in the flush of victory I have a sneaking fear whether Dulcie will be quite pleased when a hundred and fifty yards of chintz arrive at our little flat. Knowing what women are, there is always the chance that she may take a dislike to the pattern, or have a relapse.

PLANTING THE BULBS.

"GEORGE dear," said the young wife, "I have been helping you lots to-day. I know how anxious you were to get the bulbs planted, so I put in all the daffodils for you."

"Splendid!" exclaimed George, his face beaming with pride.

"Yes," she went on, "I planted them all tails downwards. That's right, isn't it? And some of the fearfully big ones I cut in halves, just like I've seen father do with the potatoes on his allotment."

Poor George! It was a great trial to his love, but he said nothing. Wise man. There will be trouble when the flowers don't bloom in the spring, but why meet it half-way?



MUSIC AND MADNESS.

AN American scientist claims to have discovered a method of curing mental diseases by music. This is good news, as quite a number of people have been driven mad by the same means. This new cure will also provide a strong situation for playwrights.

Imagine the great scene in the third act when the hero has lost his memory:

HEROINE: Oh, if I could only bring back the light of reason to that noble brow! Stay! I will perform a selection on the trombone; perhaps the strains will touch some answering chord in his cerebrum. (She plays.)

HERO: Ah, what sound is this? That voice! My father, the marquis! I remember everything and a lot over. I am Lord Bosham, and you are my betrothed!

(Heroine gives one final blast on the trombone and swoons in his arms.)



FILM PRODUCER (to star):

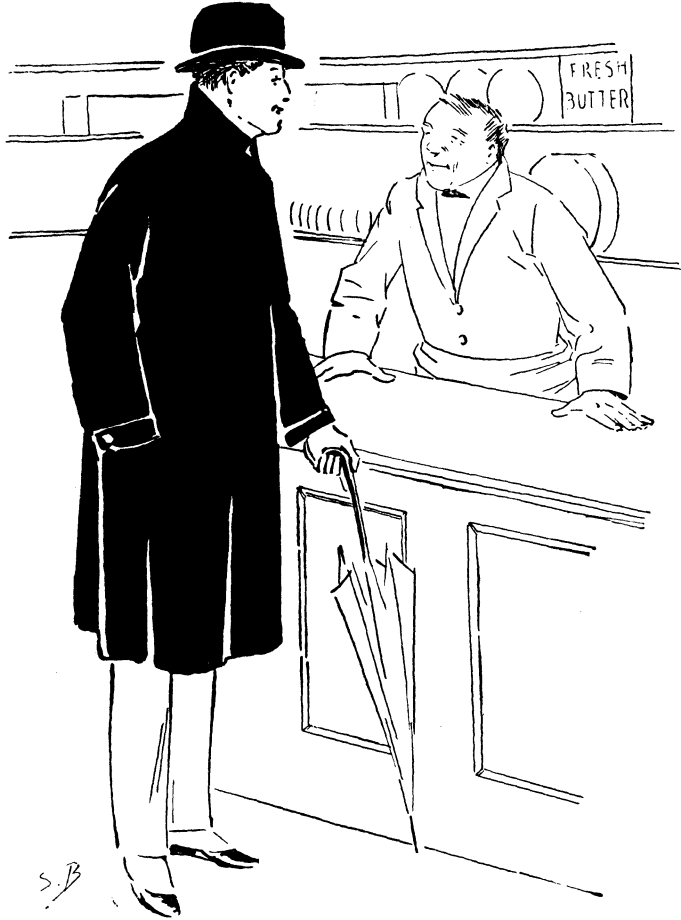
Please remember that when you are hurled over the cliff by the villain you have to register pained surprise, cheerful resignation that you are suffering in the cause of the heroine, and an expression indicating to the audience that if you are not dashed to pieces on the rocks below you will one day get even with the miscreant.

CONDUCTOR ON THE UNDERGROUND: Inner Circle! Inner Circle!

BEWILDERED SCHOOLMISTRESS (with party of children up in Town for the day for the first time): Form a ring quickly, dears, or the young man won't take us.



ATTEMPTS are being made by super-dentists to isolate the toothache microbe. It is supposed that they want to teach it some new tricks.



NO INDICATION.

VISITOR: What awful weather, and the glass is going steadily down!
LOCAL TRADESMAN: Curious thing, sir, but the glass has no effect whatever in this part of the country.

THE garden fête in aid of a local charity was drawing to a close, and all unsold articles from the stalls were being put up for auction. Among these was a life policy, which no one seemed very anxious to buy.

"Come," said the auctioneer in persuasive tones, "all you've got to do is to die within the year, and then you get the benefit."

THE MUFFIN MAN.

When the little, old, brown teapot has been set
upon the hob,
And the toasting fork beside the fire is ready for a
job,
When the clock that once was grandpapa's points
out the time as well,
I shut my book and listen for the muffin man's bell.

And when they hear it tinkle, tinkle, tinkling along,
The cat and kettle both begin a cosy, little song;
And I can almost fancy, some day, just like Peter
Pan,
Come flying through the window I shall see the
muffin man.

A MATTER OF DATES.

"THIS," said the guide, showing a party over an historic mansion, "is the room occupied by Queen Elizabeth when she visited these parts, and that's the bed she slept on."

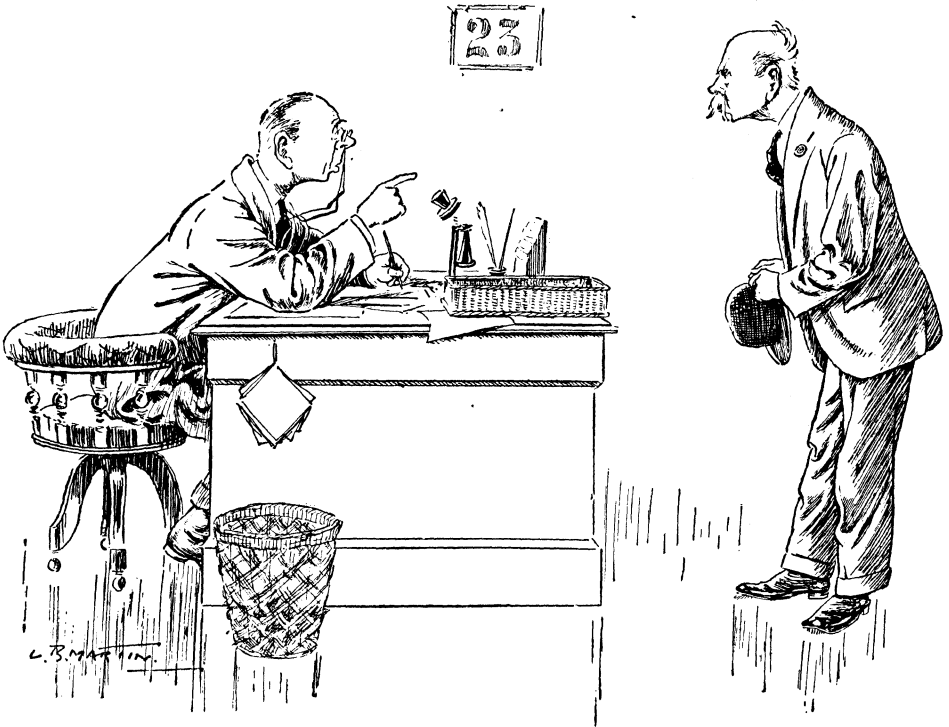
"My dear sir," remarked one of the visitors, an elderly antiquarian, "haven't you made some mistake?"

"What d'yer mean—mistake?"

"Why, the bedstead is of Jacobean pattern, and apparently a reproduction at that."

"Well, she wasn't particular about the pattern of the bed she slept on."

"But it belongs to a much later period. The house itself is very late Tudor, and really



MAKING A SONG OF IT.

MANAGER OF GAS COMPANY: In reporting on the therm, inspector, am I right in saying that consumers do not make quite such a "song" about it?

INSPECTOR: Er—not exactly, sir, as I am continually being asked now: "Where do thermos go in the winter-time?"

I used to think, when grown-up, I would like to be
his bride,
And live on muffins all my life—and how I cried
and cried

When told it could not be; for he already, it appears,
Has a missis and quite half a dozen little muffineers!

Ada Leonora Harris.

I am not aware that Queen Elizabeth ever
sojourned in this neighbourhood."

"Oh, all rite—taking the bread out of a
man's mouth! This ain't the bed what Queen
Elizabeth didn't sleep on when she wasn't 'ere
before the 'ouse was built. 'Ow will that do?"



MILLINER'S ASSISTANT (fitting a customer
with one of the new wooden hats): Try this,
madame; it suits the expression of your face
beautifully.

DENTIST: Will you have gas?

NERVOUS PATIENT: Well—er—only 'just a
therm or two.

When
you arrive home
on a cold day, drink
Van Houten's
— the cocoa that
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invigorates
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"LEFT! RIGHT!"

By B. Noël Sazelby.

BILTON has always prided himself on his decision of character. The rest of us wouldn't have minded if he'd kept his pride locked in his own breast, or let us discover his good qualities for ourselves, but he was always bleating about it.

"Yes, I always know my own mind," you could hear him declaiming to any luckless newcomer. "Funny thing, how even as a kid I could keep my head in an emergency. Did I ever tell you about the fire at my prep. school? Well, you see . . ." and so on, about the fire, or the football match, or the hundred and one other occasions when he, Bilton, had kept his head, acted with lightning decision, and saved the situation.

But there is a beautiful peace pervading the club since Bilton—well, I'll tell you.

Besides his initiative, Bilton prided himself on his broad-mindedness. Any innovation he considered and, if it met with his approval, welcomed and adopted with enthusiasm. Thus the "Keep to the left" campaign pleased him hugely.

"Mighty sensible notion," he pronounced. "Where else but here would you have one rule for the pavement and another for the road? Half the street accidents would be avoided if people would only step off the pavement facing the oncoming traffic"—and much more, quoted verbatim from the daily paper he patronises. And his approval at once took active form. I believe he then and there made a progress for a mile through the busiest streets he could find, aggressively keeping to the left the whole way, charging those who had the temerity to stand up to him, and leaving a train of destruction and profanity in his wake.

"An ounce of active propaganda is worth a ton of theory," he remarked afterwards, in a complacent tone.

For a short time Bilton kept up his work of

active propaganda. Then we showed him, with inward glee, a paragraph to the effect that the Ministry of Transport refused to take steps to enforce the new rule, which was not recognised by the City Corporation. Bilton's face fell, and a hint of uncertainty showed itself. If the reform was going to fail, was it worth while identifying himself with the movement?

Jones and I were in the window when he approached the club next day. As he drew near, we thought we detected a slightly chastened air about him. Just outside, he



THAT ACCOUNTS FOR IT.

MISTRESS (to maid who invariably returns in an expensive car on her day out): Whose car is it you are always jaunting about in, Ethel?

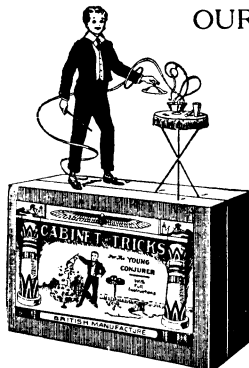
ETHEL: My father's, madam. You see, he made a lot of money during the War, and, as a matter of fact, I only took this post to learn how to behave like a lady!

encountered a large, aggressive-looking man, who came swinging along at a good pace. The pavement is narrow, and at the moment there was a handcart drawn up at the kerb.

As the two met, Bilton instinctively swerved to the left, and the other simultaneously moved to his right; recollected himself suddenly, and turned precipitately to the right, as his

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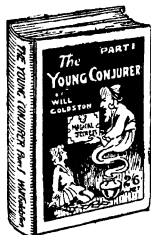
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opponent also shifted his position ; swung back again in a panic of indecision, only to find his way blocked once more ; and then lost his head completely. The two dodged backwards and forwards, and we watched entranced. At last the big man lost his temper.

"Confound you, sir!" he roared. "If you don't know the simple rules of the road, and if you can't make up the thing you call your mind *which* way you want to go, for Heaven's sake *stand still* and let me go round you! And let me advise you, sir," he added, with a glare that sent his eyeglass flying from its place, "to enlist in the Army, sir, to enlist in the Army. They may not be able to drill any intelligence into you, but you will at least learn there to distinguish your right hand from

THE SPANISH CRAZE.

(Experts predict that Spanish fashions will soon be all the rage in English Society.)

**Start the light guitar a-twanging and the castanets a-banging,
And sing an Old Madridish sort of strain ;
Cultivate the customs funny which they have in
sleepy, sunny,
Never-work-if-you-can-help-it good old Spain.**

**Feast on onions and tortilla, wrap your head in a
mantilla,
And take a long siesta after noon ;
Then when you go to meet a charming little
señorita,
Arrange to serenade her 'neath the moon.**

**Of course you'll foot it lightly in the gay fandango
nightly,
And try to reproduce the Spanish strut ;**



TWO SIDES TO A QUESTION.

ONLOOKER: Watch 'is eyes, Jim—watch 'is eyes!

FIGHTER: You shut up! If you 'adn't been so free wiv your advice, 'e wouldn't 'ave watched mine!

your left!" And he swept magnificently on his way, leaving the demoralised Bilton to slink up the steps.

We were playing bridge when he came in.

"Was that left, partner?" asked Jones innocently, regarding his hand.

"Or right," I murmured idiotically, and we broke into unfeeling laughter as the door closed softly behind Bilton's retreating form.

**You must take a great delight in toreadors and
bull-fighting,
If you want to be a Barcelona nut.**

**When out at night you stagger, wear a long black
cloak and dagger
And stand with folded arms in corners dark ;
If a policeman bids you vanish, just explain in
broken Spanish:
"Me pretendo be Hispania for a lark!"**

R. H. Roberts.

"You said that the hat I bought here last week was an exclusive Paris model, and now Mrs. Jones, over the way, is wearing one exactly like it."

"Ah, no, pardon, madam, but her hat has a different-coloured lining inside the crown."

Facing Third Cover.]

"I must say," remarked a lady to her cook, "that you perform your duties in a very perfunctory manner."

"Thank you, mum," said the cook. "I've been 'ere three months, and that's the first word of praise I've 'ad."

WINDSOR

FEBRUARY



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Save your Wrappers	per 6d. tablet	Save your Wrappers
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In this connection the Proprietors
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PRIZE COMPETITION

The prizes will be awarded to those who send
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£500 in Cash Prizes

1st Prize -	£100	20 prizes of	£10
2nd Prize -	£50	15 prizes of	£5
3rd Prize -	£25	25 prizes of	£2

CONDITIONS

1. Only *printed* wrappers which cover the outside of each tablet of Soap will be considered.
2. Each parcel of wrappers must bear the name and address of the sender and the total number sent must be clearly written.
3. Wrappers should be sent neatly folded, either by Registered Post or otherwise delivered in a sealed packet to address as under.
4. Names and addresses of Prize Winners will be published in the Daily Mail, Daily Express, Daily Mirror, Daily Sketch, May 31.
5. In the event of ties the prizes will be divided. The decision of the Managing Director of Wright Layman and Umney, Ltd., will be final, and no correspondence in connection with this Competition will be entered into. Address: Prize Competition, Wright's Coal Tar Soap, 44/50, Southwark Street, London, S.E. 1.

Last day for receiving wrappers April 30, 1923.



A WOODLAND PATH.

Reproduced from a photographic study published by Judges', Limited, Hastings.



"The girl and the team swept forward."

A WANDERER'S WOOING

By OTTWELL BINNS

Author of 'The Lady of North Star,' "A Hazard of the Snows," "The Treasure of Christophe," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY DUDLEY TENNANT

GEORGE CARMACK had yet to discover the Klondyke, and the Northland was almost *terra incognita* when, racing the hurrying winter and the Russian trader whose store he had robbed, Terence O'Grady drove down an unnamed tributary of the Koyukuk in his canoe. With flaming head and beard, and blue Irish eyes that had ever a glint of laughter in them, he was a giant of a man, with thews so Goliathan that had the frail paddle he plied been as a weaver's beam, he could still have wielded it with ease. For three weeks he had fled, not fearing the wrath of the Russian very greatly, but fearing much the winter speeding down from the North, and seeking a lodging-place before the snow should come, and still the desired haven seemed as remote as ever.

All the signs told him that he had lost the race. A week ago the honking of great

wedges of Canada geese, like himself fleeing southward, had kept him company in the solitude, but now a vast silence filled the land. The sky was empty of its feathered freemen, and for two days he had set eyes on no animate thing. The last that he had seen, a lonely wanderer, had been a great eagle winging his way austere down the wind; and O'Grady knew that the eagle was the last of feathered things to leave the sanctuary of the North. There were other signs also. The days had grown alarmingly shorter. There was rim ice in the creeks and along the banks. Soft mush ice showed in the water overside, froze to the bows of the canoe, and sheathed the paddle in gleaming armour, whilst ashore, in the hollows, there were already little patches of snow, precursors of the great snows to come.

Plying the paddle, he reflected on these signs, and surveyed the desolate prospect,

the high-banked river with its lines of funereal pines, the mountains, snow-capped, that towered ahead, and almost yearned for the store on Kobuk River and the company of the drunken Russian.

"Lor'," he said aloud, "but 'tis a disolate land; an' if this blamed river don't reach somewhere soon——" He broke off and shook his flaming head ominously, whilst a grave look came in the blue eyes. A wanderer always, he had yet a sociable soul that loved the company of his kind, and the thought of a winter alone in this forlorn land filled him with tremors that no man on earth could have awakened.

Then quite suddenly an alert look came in his eyes, and his wide nostrils dilated as he sniffed the air exactly as a dog sniffs.

"Burning spruce!" he said, a little quiver of excitement in his voice. "That manes a camp as shure as iver anythin' can i' this world."

He stared ahead of him, the excitement that had been in his tones now lighting his eyes, and a look of keen expectation on his face. He saw nothing for some time until, rounding a high bluff, he came quite suddenly upon nearly a score of tepees standing on the high bank.

"Indians!" he ejaculated, as he drove his canoe inshore.

As he did so, a squaw came out of one of the tepees and, seeing him, stared at him like one transfixed. Never before had she seen a man whose hair was like flame, and her sloe-black eyes grew round with fear. Then she gave a screech and darted back into the moose-hide tent from which she had emerged. Three seconds later the whole tribe was tumbling out of the tepees, and with practised eyes O'Grady counted them quickly as they assembled and waited in a non-committal attitude that might be hostile or not—he could not tell.

"Twenty-eight—no, twenty-nine bucks, not counthin' that dirty old ruffian at the back."

He knew that he was taking risks, that men of his blood, venturing into remote camps such as this, had been treacherously slain or had died fighting impossible odds, but not for a moment did his stroke slacken as he drove his canoe to the landing-place. He was of a conquering race that was destined to be master of this bleak land, and no list of fear dimmed the brightness of his reckless courage as he surveyed the silent natives. As the canoe beached he stepped out, facing the crowd, calmly

dragged the craft up the sand, keeping all the time an eye upon the assembly, then broke a small packet of ammunition and dropped the shells in his pocket, and a moment later, rifle in hand, he climbed the bank, making the sign of peace.

"Now, I wondher what divil's lingo the beggars shling?"

He was not left long in doubt. A man who stood a little in front of the others, and who wore an air of authority, returned his sign and spoke to him in a dialect that at first puzzled the wanderer's ears. But seven years spent between Kotzebue and Norton Sound had made him familiar with many tribal tongues, and as the Indian repeated his question, the Irishman caught a few words that he understood.

"Where do I come from, me fri'nd?" he said, with a grin. "Is that the throuble? Thin ye're aisily pl'ased." He waved his arm to the northward. "From up there, ye beggar!"

He translated these words or something like them into a dialect prevailing among the Allakaket natives, and, watching the man's eyes, he saw that he was understood. A second question followed.

"Where am I goin'?" "Struth, who knows? Not me!" He grinned to himself as he spoke the words, then gave a considered answer, explaining that he had come far and had yet far to go to the south, but that he was tired, and proposed to rest for a little time before continuing his journey.

Answering, the native pointed to the rim-ice and to the snow in the hollows, and once looked up towards the sky, across which greasy-looking clouds were drifting. O'Grady easily gathered the purport of his words.

"Winther comin'! Well, I know it, ye scut. An' I'm clane bate in the race! That's why I propose to inflict mesilf upon ye!"

For direct answer he returned to his canoe, unfastened a couple of packages, and took therefrom two pounds of tea and half a score of sticks of tobacco. With these he returned to the waiting Indians, and saw the impassive face of their leader lighten suddenly as he offered them to him. He grinned cheerfully as the native took them with covetous hand.

"I thought that 'ud fetch ye, me son! An' now for the barg'in."

Speaking slowly, he explained again his need for rest, and asked for the use of a tepee until such time as he should move on. For this privilege he would pay one blanket, one pound of tea, and ten sticks

of the white man's tobacco. When he left, if the snow should come and the river freeze up before the event, he would require dogs and a sled, for which he would pay royally, if the chief were willing, for in the canoe he had many things beyond his need. He had scarcely finished this request when a hostile voice spoke up, and through the crowd of watching Indians the old man, whom he had not reckoned in his estimate of the tribal males, thrust his way and began to talk in an undertone to the chief.

"A dirthy Shaman!" said O'Grady to himself under his breath. "Av all the rotten luck!"

He knew well the power of the Alaskan witch-doctors, and instantly realised that here was a man to be placated at all costs. Whilst the two were still talking, he went back to his canoe and took therefrom more tea, and was counting out sticks of black tobacco, when, happening to glance up, he was frozen into immobility, and an amazed look came on his bronzed face.

Poling a small canoe across the river, and now not half a dozen yards from the point where he stood, was a girl whose unbound hair, blowing in the wind, was straw-coloured, whose skin was at least as white as his own, and whose eyes were blue with the cold blue of the northern seas. He stared at her in astonishment. A moose-skin tunic, barbarically beaded, and close-fitting, revealed the outlines of her lissom body, her rounded arms, bare almost to the shoulder, were statuesque in quality, whilst the hands that plied the pole, driving the canoe to the bank, were as capable as his own. As the canoe beached, she leaped out, stooped, and hauled it clear of the current; then she stood upright, and the cold blue eyes surveyed him with a wondering interrogation in their depths.

O'Grady's heart leaped as those eyes met his. His own kindled, and he was conscious of a sudden surge of riotous emotion, that made him forget the watching Indians and the hostile Shaman.

"Girl," he cried, "ye're white as milk! Where——"

The sound of wrangling voices broke on his words, and as the girl moved forward suddenly, his eyes followed her, and at the same moment surprised the Shaman pointing from the girl to him and speaking vehemently. The words were like a flood—too many and too fast for him to follow them—but that the purport of them was hostile to himself he had never a doubt.

But that thought disturbed him little. He would stay now though all the Shamans in Alaska stood on the bank to deny him his will. He saw the girl pass through the watching ranks to one of the tepees, and still following her with his eyes, a moment later he saw a hand draw the skin curtain of the tepee aside, and then he laughed suddenly.

"Ye're curious, me dear, but, by the Powers, ye're not one half as curious as meself."

Very deliberately he resumed his counting of the tobacco sticks, and carried them and the tea to the filthy-looking Shaman. "There, ye ould ghost-findher," he said, with a grin as he handed them to the man, "maybe that'll quiet ye for a while!"

The Shaman's eyes glistened as he took the peace-offering, and apparently he changed his views, for his tone moderated, and O'Grady caught a word or two that told him that the wind was shifting in his favour. Then quite suddenly the chief gave a grunt, and the Irishman knew that he was to have his way; for a moment later the Indian pointed to one of the tepees, and the wanderer gathered that it was to be his lodging-place.

"Right, me buck!" he said cheerfully; and, very conscious that the white girl in the neighbouring tepee was watching him, he immediately began to transfer his possessions from the canoe to the moose-hide tent. He was still engaged upon the task, whistling cheerfully to himself, when he surprised the Shaman with a covetous look upon his face—a look that he interpreted quite easily. "So that's yo'r game, me scut, is ut? Well, if ye thry iny av thim thricks, ye'll git the surprise av yo'r dirthy life!"

And, still whistling, he finished the unloading of his canoe.

II.

It was not until two days later that O'Grady found the opportunity of speech with the girl who had so piqued his curiosity, though in the interval he had sought it diligently. It was very cold; there had been a deep fall of snow, and the river was running white and sluggishly, proving that the freeze-up was near at hand, when deep in the wood behind the encampment he met her suddenly face to face. For the moment he was too surprised to speak, but as the girl made as if to pass him, he put a restraining hand upon her arm.

"No, me dear," he said, "ye an' me have

got to talk whiles we've th' chanst. Fwhat are ye doin' here, all on y'or lonesome?"

For a second the girl stared at him with

Then the girl spoke slowly and hesitatingly, like one recalling an almost forgotten tongue.

"Me"—she touched her breast as she spoke—"me—Hilda!"

"Hilda! An' a nice name, too,



Dudley Tennant

"He swung to the door and dropped upon one knee."

startled eyes, but did not speak, and the Irishman changed the form of his question. "In Hiven's name, who are ye, maid?"

me dear! It fits ye like a glove. But where's the father av ye? An' fwhat are ye doin' in this God-forsaken place?"

For a moment he watched whilst the girl visibly struggled with the question, then her reply came: "My fader—he gone dead!"

change in the expression on the girl's face, and as her blue eyes looked beyond him into the recesses of the wood, he swung



In front of them stood the Shaman, exhorting them vociferously."

"An' how long 'ave ye bin up here, me dear?"

The girl shook her head, and finally replied in Indian speech: "Many moons."

"An' where did ye come from?"

Again he watched the girl's face, and saw her mind struggle with the question, then suddenly she flung her arm northward.

"Up there! My fader, he seek for gold!"

"If he'd looked ut the hair av ye——"

O'Grady broke off sharply at a sudden

round and saw a young Indian vanish behind a tree.

"Who's the buck?" he asked sharply, and then, as the girl apparently failed to comprehend him, he repeated his question in the dialect that he had used on his arrival at the camp. Instantly the girl replied in the speech of the tribe:

"He's the Shaman's son. In seven days I go to his lodge to be his squaw."

"Squaw!" cried the Irishman. "Hiven!

But ye're white, child! Ye can niver do that!"

"Because I am fair and not as the daughters of the tribe, does he desire me for his squaw."

"The baste!" shouted the Irishman in vehement indignation. "I'll tache him! Child, ye're not to do ut! 'Twould be a crime, an' I'll break the man wid my two hands first!"

His eyes, fixed on the girl, saw the cold blue eyes kindle with sudden warmth, and his own flamed in instant response.

"Girl," he cried, his hand upon her arm again, "I'll wed ye mesilf before that scout shall have ye, an' I'll take ye away from these fish-eaters!"

"But the Beaver has paid a big price in skins to Ne-Geek."

"Fwhat matther? I'll outbid the baste, or I'll fight for ye, but let him take ye I will not! Come wid me back to the camp, an' we'll clinch the bargain ut oncest."

He took the girl's hand, and as he saw a soft, worshipful light in the blue eyes that met his own, his heart danced, and he laughed joyously. "'Tis a praste we'll be wantin' in no time ut all, me dear, though Hiven knows where we'll find one in this disolate counthry! But there's one thing that nades no praste."

He gathered her swiftly in his great arms and kissed her. As the red beard swept her lips, the girl grew suddenly rosy, and for one moment she clung to him as to one who had brought unexpected salvation. Then, at the sound of a snapping stick behind her, the girl broke free and looked swiftly round, and from his greater height Terence O'Grady looked over her head to see the Shaman's son regarding him with malevolent eyes. He laughed carelessly as he saw the look on the other's face, and, utterly regardless of the Indian's resentment, took the girl's arm.

"Come, me darlin', an' watch me bid for ye!"

They returned to the camp quickly, but, notwithstanding their haste, the Shaman's son was there before them, and even as they came in sight of the tepees, they saw him and the Shaman moving towards Ne-Geek's tent.

"Go, me dear! In five minutes I'll bring the price av ye."

As the girl moved forward, he went into his own tepee, and presently emerged with arms filled with a miscellaneous assortment of stores that he had brought from the

trading post on Kobuk River. Carrying these, he strode into Ne-Geek's tepee. The Shaman was there, talking vociferously, whilst his son stood by listening, a dark look upon his face. A little way off, seated on a skin bale, was the chief, with the girl standing behind him, watching with grave eyes. On O'Grady's entrance the Shaman broke off his harangue, and his son's hand went to the knife in his belt. The Irishman noted the action and grinned, then carefully set down the things he carried, enumerating in native speech as he did so—

"Two score sticks of tobacco, five packages of tea, and two of beads for the squaws, two axes of true steel with knife-edges, half a score of handkerchiefs of the colours of the Northern Lights, a blanket, and three knives of the best."

Ne-Geek's eyes gleamed as they feasted themselves upon these riches, and as the Shaman gave a guttural exclamation, the chief spoke.

"These are the gift of the flame-haired one?"

"No!" retorted the Irishman promptly. "They are the price of the girl whose face is fair, whom I would take for my squaw!"

A sudden hoarse cry broke from the Shaman's son. He leaped forward, gripped one of the axes, and swung it to brain his rival. Swift as lightning, O'Grady's fist shot out, and as the crashing blow took him in the face, the young Indian toppled backward, the axe falling from his hand. Before he could recover himself, the Irishman sprang forward, picked him up as if he had been a bundle of furs, and flung him out of the tepee. The Shaman gave a guttural shout of rage, and, before he knew what was happening, found himself thrust into the snow outside. Then O'Grady spoke again.

"The axes are true, O Ne-Geek, the tea is black and strong, the tobacco of the best, the blanket is thick, and the handkerchiefs and beads most bright. Behold!"

He displayed the things before the chief's eyes, and, as he did so, saw an expression of cunning flit across the native's wrinkled face. O'Grady marked it, and knew that the chief was meditating treachery; but he gave no sign. Instead, he waited with impassive face until the other spoke, aware of an increasing sound of tumult outside, and very conscious of the girl's blue eyes alight with fear for him. Then Ne-Geek made a negative sign.

"It cannot be, O Flame-Hair. The Shaman——"

O'Grady laughed suddenly and, whilst the chief broke off in surprise, produced from capacious pockets a couple of bottles of cheap vodka. Ne-Geek's eyes lighted covetously as they beheld the bottles, proving that he was no stranger to the fiery liquor they held.

"These to the price," said O'Grady calmly.

Ne-Geek grunted and stretched a grimy hand, and the suitor grinned with triumph and commented aloud: "Niver knew good liquor to fail."

He still retained possession of the bottles, notwithstanding the chief's hungry hand, until Ne-Geek spoke. "Give me the burning water, Flame-Hair. Take the girl to thy lodge and keep her, if thou canst."

"Oh, I'll keep her, Ne-Geek, niver fear."

"Beware the Shaman——"

"That dirty scut! I'll wring the neck av him if he lifts a hand!" He turned to the girl. "Come, Hilda, me darlin'. The sooner we quit this camp the better."

He moved towards the opening of the tepee, and as he appeared, the clamour outside was suddenly hushed. He looked at the Indians bunched together between him and his own tepee, the Shaman and his son standing a little to one side, and then gave a reckless laugh. As he did so, the silence was further broken by the twang of a bowstring, and an arrow, a trifle wide, whizzed over his shoulder and stuck in the tent-hide. With that a great wrath surged within him.

"Git back, me dear," he said to the girl, and himself took two strides backward into the tepee. Stooping, he snatched up one of the axes that formed part of the price for his bride. Ne-Geek, who was busy trying to prise the cork from one of the bottles, never even noticed him, and, with a shout, O'Grady rushed from the moose-hide tent. The Shaman's son struck at him with a fish-spear, but the Irishman deftly avoided him, yelled as he swung the axe and struck, and a second later the axe was no longer bright. Then began a battle grim and great, one man of dominant spirit and heroic mould facing Homeric odds.

O'Grady did not wait for another singing arrow, nor did he stop to consider who were and who were not his enemies. Trumpeting like a wounded bull, he sprang to the attack. His terrible axe whirled and another man went down, and yet another, caught with the flat as he swung his weapon for a further blow. Then the dark faces surged on him

like a river in flood. A spear ripped his shoulder, a bone-tipped arrow found the flesh of his left arm. But the death-dealing axe swung high and widened the circle once more, and as the Indians fell back, he broke the arrow, plucked it forth and flung it from him, and, as he did so, heard the Shaman's voice crying that now he must be taken alive.

That order suited O'Grady well enough, since it delivered him from death-dealing arrows, and with the axe ready for the next rush, he stood there like a great bull-moose at bay, with the wolves circling round, waiting to pull it down. There was a moment's pause in the uneven contest, whilst some of the Indians gnashed their teeth. Then one of them gave a shout and flung an axe. O'Grady saw it coming, and leaped aside, but, as he leaped, slipped in the snow. In a trice the Indians surged on him as wolves surge when the kill is made. The Irishman yelled and lifted himself up, with three men clinging to him. A terrific jab of his elbow broke a rib of one and toppled him in the snow, and he flung the others from him as a bear flings the attacking curs. He stooped and recovered his weapon, then for a moment he stood to gather breath, as wild-looking a figure as ever the Northern woods had seen.

There was blood upon his face and hands, and it welled from his shoulder and arm as he drew deep breaths. His cap had fallen from his head, and his shock of red hair was blown in the wind like a fiery mane. In the struggle his shirt had been torn almost from him, and across back and shoulders showed ugly scars, the unmistakable striations of the knout, for the Irishman had seen the inside of a Russian prison before he crossed the Behring to serve the drunken Russian on Kobuk River. His face was flushed, his blue eyes blazed, and his mobile mouth curled in scorn, showing his white teeth between the red fringe of beard and moustache.

The Indians fell back a few paces and looked at their priest for orders. He gave them savagely enough. The man was to be taken alive, and he should die such a death as no man had ever died. O'Grady caught the sense of the words and laughed, then he leaped to the left in the direction of his own tepee. His rifle was there, and if once he could get possession of it, he could silence and disperse this howling pack just as quick as he could throw the shells into the breach. The ring lost its shape in the direction in which he faced as the men there gave place, so hurriedly that one of them toppled into

the snow. But the circle reformed quickly, and though he made short rushes, carrying the ring in the direction in which he wished it to go, he could not break it, and once came near disaster as a native, more bold than his fellows, rushing in, struck at him and caught him in the side of the head with a spear-shaft. The Irishman reeled dizzily under the blow, but recovered himself, and the Indian paid with his life for his temerity, whilst his comrades howled like mad wolves and foamed at the mouth.

O'Grady flashed a measuring glance at the tepee that held his rifle. Nine yards at least separated him from the bourne he sought, and if the Indians guessed his design, they would block his way and his plan would be ruined. Then came an interruption that momentarily stayed the tide of battle. From the tepee of Ne-Geek came the sound of barbaric song, and as eyes turned involuntarily in that direction, Ne-Geek himself appeared and stood swaying in the tent door, bottle in hand. The fiery vodka had already done its work, and he looked out on the amazing scene with drunken eyes that comprehended nothing of what was taking place. In spite of his peril, O'Grady let loose a great rolling laugh, that was suddenly cut short by the *crang-g-g* of a rifle. One of the Indians in the circle toppled silently in the snow, whilst the others gave a yell of scared amazement and looked round for the source of this new attack.

A little drift of smoke issuing from the opening of his tepee told the Irishman whence the slaying shot had come, and instantly he guessed whose hand had pulled the trigger.

"The girl, God bless her!"

A second time the rifle cracked, and O'Grady heard the bullet whistle across the savage circle that ringed him round. The shot was wide, but it had moral effect. The circle swayed uncertainly, and the white man seized the occasion. With a yell he leaped towards the men nearest the tepee. They broke and ran in panic, and their fear communicated itself to their fellows, who ran also. In a moment O'Grady was at his tepee door. As he expected, the girl Hilda was there with the rifle in hand, struggling with the ejector, which she had somehow managed to clog.

"God bless ye, me darlin'!" ejaculated the Irishman, as he took the rifle from her hands.

In a moment he had the ejector working,

and as a new shell jerked into the breech, he swung to the door and dropped upon one knee. The Indians were bunched together perhaps thirty yards away. In front of them stood the Shaman, exhorting them vociferously, whilst, still singing his tribal chant, Ne-Geek, bottle in hand, lurched across the snow. O'Grady sighted for the Shaman and pulled the trigger. With a blood-curdling yell, the witch-doctor leaped into the air and then fell sprawling, whilst his dupes broke and ran for the nearest woods. The Irishman sent a shot over their heads to hasten them on their way, then, with Ne-Geek still staggering across the open, he stood upright and looked at the girl.

"How did ye do the thrick, me dear? I niver saw ye pass."

The girl pointed to a long slit in the moose hide at the rear of the tepee, and replied in the Indian tongue: "I am afraid, and I cut hole in Ne-Geek's tepee, and run behind here to find the rifle. Ne-Geek had one once, but it bursted. I had fired it, and I understood the way thereof. So——"

"Ye're a heroine, me dear, an' a mate for a man. Just tie up these scratches before thim curs come back, an' thin we'll git ready for quittin'."

The girl understood his gestures rather than his words, and quickly set to work to bind up the wounds, which were already congealing with the cold. When she had finished, he spoke again.

"Git dogs an' a sledge, whilst I kape an eye on these divils in the wood. 'Twill be dark in half an hour, an' we must quit this camp by thin."

The girl nodded her comprehension and immediately departed, whilst O'Grady, rifle in hand, paraded along the line of tepees, doing sentry go as he had done it in a stormy youth. Twice when figures showed among the dark pines he fired, less with the intention of hurting than for moral effect. Then, when the sled had been packed and the dogs harnessed, he gave the girl the rifle, and, whilst she kept watch, slipped a new shirt over his head and buckled it outside his breeches, Russian fashion. A bearskin coat that he had brought with him from Kobuk River and a pair of snow-shoes looted from Ne-Geek's tepee completed his outfit. When he was ready, he looked once at the waiting dogs and then at the ragged fringe of the silent woods.

"We'll start, me dear."

"But whither go we?" asked the girl in Ne-Geek's dialect.

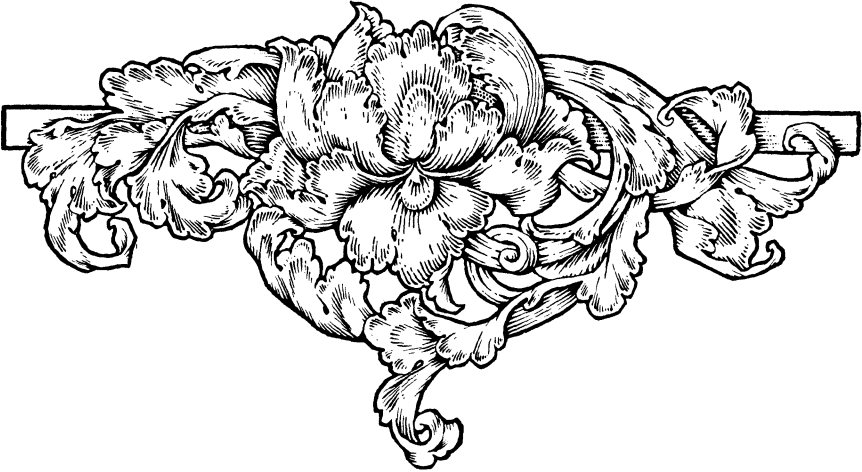
"To find a praste, me darlin'. Though 'tis me sorrow 'twill be a foreigner, but a praste is a praste the wide world over, an' he'll jine us true man an' wife then an' there!"

He laughed joyously and gave the Indian word to the dogs: "Chook! Chook!"

He cracked the whip and the dogs moved forward, and as they did so a howl of rage

broke from the silent woods, and a flight of bone-tipped arrows came down the wind. O'Grady faced the woods rifle in hand. "Kape on, swateheart!" he said, and fell upon one knee.

The girl and the team swept forward. Swiftly he emptied his rifle towards the woods, firing at random, then, with a laugh, he followed in the trail of the girl, whilst overhead the first stars gleamed on the frozen world.



FREEDOM.

YOU danced, the starlight on your hair,
The white waves at your feet,
And the first blossom of the year
Was not more sweet.

You left the sea and the sea-ribbed sand
To walk the crowded street,
And the high hopes and thoughts of youth
Were not more sweet.

You, a free thing, put on chains for love
And walked with quiet feet,
And no song uttered by poet's lips
Was half so sweet.

MARJORY M. REYNOLDS.



THE WOMAN AND THE THRUSH

THE WOMAN.

IF your claws were as full as mine,
You'd not have time to sing.
Your face would be one puckered line,
And cross as anything.
With beds to make, and meals to get,
And knives and boots to clean,
With smoky fires and washing wet,
'Tis hurry-flurry, flare and fret,
And not one single chance to get
A breathing space between.

THE THRUSH.

It takes me nearly all my time
To find my meals and things.
My bed is in yon leafless lime;
Its drippings wet my wings,
And still ahead are snowy days
And hours of icy chill.
Yet something in my being says
That He who brought me to my place,
Who gave me life, and power to fly,
He who can bid me live or die,
Commands me still. And who am I
To say my frame was only made
For nesting in a summer glade,
Or lilted in a leafy tree,
For kindly paths and easy ways,
And not for grim adversity?

FAY INCHFAWN,

Author of "Homely Verses of a Home Lover."

THINGS THAT MATTER IN GOLF

By H. H. HILTON

THE things which mainly matter in the game of golf are your good self, the clubs you use, and the way that your good self tackles the very important matter of causing a more or less accurate contact between the clubs and the ball. To the individual who has never previously seen the game of golf played, his first experience in this direction will appeal to him in varied ways. If this experience happens to be that of watching two indifferent players making their way round the links—with many indifferent efforts in evidence and a few comparatively brilliant ones, just to vary the monotony of the almost continuous failures—he will assuredly be imbued with the feeling that he would just like to have a go himself, if only for the fact that he cannot keep having an idea in his mind that he could do better himself. If he does make a tentative suggestion that he would like to have a try, and is given the chance of doing so, he may possibly, in his very first effort, produce something which is at least a little bit better than many of the efforts of the two he is watching, and this comparative success fills him, firstly, with a spirit of elation, and then with a feeling of contemptuous pity for the men he is watching. But if, on the other hand, the gentleman who is having his first gaze at the royal and ancient pastime happens to be present at a gathering in which several of the leading professors are performing, he is at first profoundly impressed with the distance which these celebrities can manage to propel a golf ball—initially, this is a cause of great wonderment to him—but by degrees he will become accustomed to the consistent regularity of their wooden club play, and takes it as a matter of course; but he becomes a stern and uncompromising critic of their efforts to get the ball into the hole from distances of four yards or under. He cannot understand how it is that a human being can manage

consistently to hit a ball a matter of about 240 yards and then equally consistently fail to prevail upon that ball to find the bottom of the hole from but a few yards away. Even the fact that the majority of the players prove themselves to be equally incapable in this part of the game is not sufficient to suggest to his mind that the short game must be a peculiarly difficult phase. He is just filled with a feeling of pitying contempt for the futile efforts of those great men on the putting greens—so much so that he feels within his inner soul that he could do better himself if he was only granted a chance of attempting the feat.

The truth is, the game of golf invariably appears to the uninitiated spectator as a very simple game indeed. He is lost in wonderment at some of the feats which he sees accomplished, but he is also not a little lost in wonderment at many of the unexpected failures. It is only when he himself has played the game for some considerable period of time that he is able to grasp and understand the reason of these successes and failures. Then a knowledge is given to him which at least goes a long way to explain why golf is a complex game. Moreover, it is a mystifying and bewildering game, not to mention that it is one which is inclined to humiliate and to humble the soul of man.

Now to the things that may matter in this most difficult game of golf. Some coaches will take out an absolutely raw beginner at the game, put the club in his hands, tee up the ball, and then commence a series of operations in regard to the position of the hands, fingers, legs, feet, etc., which always remind me of a window-dresser arranging a model in the window of a big clothes emporium. The coach, having arranged the human lay figure just to his liking, then tells him to swing the club and hit the ball, and the customary result is that there is a complete failure to carry out the

latter part of the instructions—the required contact between the club-face and the ball has failed to materialise. One would think that this failure might serve to discourage the coach. Not a bit of it, for the reason that he has seen it happen so often in the past; it is, consequently, no cause for surprise to him. He actually anticipated this result. He then commences to dress up his figure once again, possibly telling him to hold his right hand a little bit more under or over the grip, and bring his right foot a little more round. But it does not much matter what he tells him; it is so patent that he is teaching the art of striking a golf ball with a golf club in what may be termed detailed sections, giving each little section of the pupil's anatomy a special duty to perform, and, incidentally, unconsciously impressing upon the mind of that pupil that unless each section of his anatomy performs its individual duty satisfactorily, disaster will assuredly follow. The customary result is that the poor fellow who is attempting to learn and digest the initiatory art of playing golf becomes bewildered and muddled. He is attempting to think of about eight different things he should do—things which represent more or less double Dutch to his virgin golfing mind—and is expected at the same time to swing the club. In that, under these circumstances, he fails to cause the club to make contact with the ball is a failing on his part which may readily be forgiven. It is not his fault; it is the fault of the man who presented him with too many things to think about all at the same time. And probably some readers may have heard of the old story of the golfing coach and the pupil. The coach handled his human subject in the

most complete and scientifically efficient manner. He first moved the right foot about a bit, and then the left a slight fraction; treated his elbows, his knees, hands and fingers. Having completed all these preliminaries to his entire satisfaction, he said to the victim of this very thorough overhauling: "Now swing, sir." There was no physical response to this invitation, but the victim looked appealingly at his tormentor and said: "Swing? Why, I can't even move!" This is merely a story and a digression, but I have told it with the object of impressing the futility of a beginner attempting to master too many of the intricate details which go to make a good and true golfing swing at one and the same time.

A study of the said details may be useful when the player has once grasped the fundamental principles which govern



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H. H. HILTON DRIVING.

[Sport & General.

so far beyond the horizontal position that the club-head at the top of the swing travelled so far back that it was almost level with his left knee. Still, Harry, with a swing which appeared to be almost out of control, managed to win championships, and won them owing to his wonderful physical balance. Other players less gifted in the sense of balance would have found a swing of this abnormal length an insuperable bar to continued success. Watching Harry Vardon during more recent times, it is a little difficult to imagine that he once had an abnormally long and, moreover, be it said, a comparatively uncontrolled swing, but it is true; there are photographs

the golfing swing, but he has to grasp these latter first. What are they? Well, opinions, no doubt, vary greatly on this point, but personally I should mention them as freedom, balance, and control, and the greatest of these three is balance. It is surely the main secret of successful golf. Freedom is an extremely useful asset, but it is of little avail unless it is accompanied by a sense of balance; and control of the club is very necessary to players of the highest class, but you can do without either freedom or control, provided you have the physical sense of balance, and still make at least a comparative success of the game.

To take our great players during the past thirty years: Harry Vardon has a wonderful sense of balance, which, to my mind, is exemplified by the fact that in his younger days he had a habit of swinging the club

extant which prove the fact—his wonderful sense of balance saved him. John Henry Taylor has always had a good balance, to my way of thinking, not quite as good as that of Harry Vardon; but, on the other hand, he did not require it so much, as from his very youthful days he has been the possessor of a wonderfully compact and controlled swing.

James Braid must have the sense of physical balance, otherwise he could not throw himself about as he does and still hit the ball so accurately; but in the case of James it is more difficult to realise that the balance is there. But it is the same with all the great golfers. You may disagree with the method in which Ray and Herd sway the body and swing the club, but their sense of balance has saved them. To turn to the amateurs, Mr. John Ball is a model

in the matter of balance, and of the younger school commend me to young Master Bobby Jones from America. He seldom seems to get his balancing machinery a fraction of an inch out of gear.

Well, how did these gentlemen acquire their sense of balance? No doubt it was originally the gift of Nature, but they must have matured that gift, and any golfer can improve his physical balance by training. Unfortunately, we cannot see ourselves, but, on the other hand, we have a certain inner sense which will surely tell us when our balance is what may be termed wavering—in other words, insecure at the top of the swing. The head

is, I am told, the main factor towards a good balance, but there is no doubt as to the part of the anatomy which exhibits the sign that the balance has not been correct, and that is the nether limbs; and I simply say, pay attention to the legs and feet. Half the faulty play in golf comes from a faulty stance or a lack of security arising from the initial stance. A player will go on worrying and trifling about the position of hands and fingers on the club-handle and wonder whatever is the matter with him. If he would transfer his attention from his arms and fingers to his legs and feet, he might find the remedy for his temporary failings much more quickly. I have often come across golfers who have been hopelessly at sea over their

game, who have said to me: "Do come and have a look at me, and see if you can tell me what I am doing wrong."

The first thing that I always do is to look at their legs and feet, and more often than not find that the evil arises from the position and attitude they take up with this section of their physical make-up. The average golfer is extraordinarily haphazard and casual in regard to his stance. He takes up any old kind of stance, and if it is not his normal one, and he attempts to swing in his normal manner, there is almost sure to be a disaster. Take the case of the class of player who is in the habit of playing the

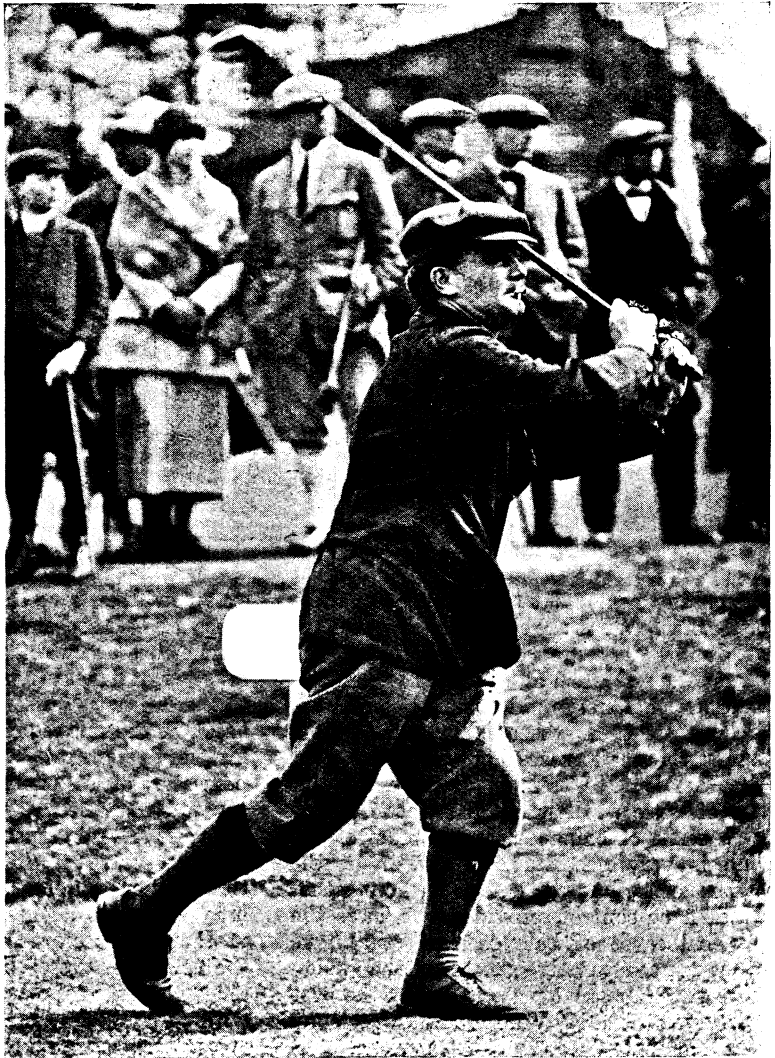


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[Sport & General.

H. H. HILTON DRIVING.



Photo by]

H. H. HILTON AT FINISH OF SWING.

[Sport & General.

ball from what is termed "off his left leg," and playing for a hook or pull. He will, week by week, unconsciously keep on moving his left leg a little more forward until he has got it into such a position that he cannot possibly utilise his customary swing and hope for any measure of success. If he does attempt to employ his customary methods of swinging, he will find that they completely fail to synchronise with the altered stance. If he unconsciously alters his methods so as to adapt them to

this altered stance, he is again courting disaster, as the new method of swinging is an unaccustomed one to him. He will be in despair until some kind friend who is familiar with his play will come along and say: "You are standing quite differently from the way you used to do. You have got your right leg about six inches farther behind the left than you used to have it." "Have I?" says the poor golfing invalid, who is in a state when he will listen to any advice. "I will try putting that left foot a little farther back." He does so, and hey presto! he is once again his old normal golfing self.

But he has been through a bad time in the meanwhile, listening to much advice in regard to such things as the little finger of the right hand resting between the forefinger and the thumb of the left hand, over-pivoting, under-pivoting, the shut and the open face, etc., most of which advice has only served to make him worse and more worried than ever. It rather reminds me of an amusing incident I once witnessed in connection with the starting of a motor-car. Two of my friends had been half an hour attempting to make the beast start, and they were arriving at the state of complete despair, when a man came along, and they appealed to him in regard to whether he knew any-

thing about cars, and could help them. After a cursory glance, he said: "I know practically nothing about cars, but I think I know sufficient to help you. You have not got your switch on."

Another point in which golfers are very haphazard is in connection with the position in which the ball is placed in relation to the feet. Watch the first-class players carefully, and you will find that the great majority of them have the ball placed in a position in line with the left heel, and I think that it may

be accepted that in the case of five players out of six this is the most advisable position. I believe that most golfers are quite aware of this fact; it is a gospel which has so often been preached in the text-books. The average golfer may be aware of the advantages to be gained by accepting this gospel, but he cannot consistently follow it; and you will see him first play a shot with the ball placed opposite the toes of the left foot, or even from a position in front of them, and then in the course of a hole or two find that the ball is placed midway between the two feet, and he is attempting to swing the club on similar principles for both these entirely different stances. It simply cannot be done. For varying stances you must vary your swing, and it is only the experienced expert who can afford to vary his stance, for the reason that he varies it *intentionally*, and is consequently very much aware of the fact that there must be a variation from the normal in his swing.

I may to some appear to be somewhat belabouring this point of the importance of the functions of the legs and feet, but I am doing it intentionally in that I consider that sufficient attention is never paid to the part they play in the game of golf, and before I depart from the subject I am going to deal with the question of the "too early" raising of the right heel. In practically every golfing swing in which any degree of force is used, the right heel leaves the ground shortly before the moment of impact, but sometimes, alas! it has a habit of temporarily departing from Mother Earth some considerable time before the impact between club-face and ball takes place. There is a correct time when the right heel should come up during the downward swing, and there is a wrong time, and this wrong time is the portion of downward swing before the hands have passed the right knee. If you raise the right heel before this period of the swing, the whole mechanism which preserves your balance has gone away, and anything may happen to the result of the shot, and it is this premature raising of this heel which is so often responsible for hitting the ball off the socket of an iron club. In an

exhibition game played on the Mid-Surrey course, in which the four stalwarts, Vardon, Taylor, Braid and Herd, were taking part, I took the trouble to stand directly behind them when playing their respective tee shots in a four-ball game, and I focussed my attention directly upon this question of the period of the swing at which the right heel left the ground, and in not one single instance could it be said that the right heel had been raised until the hands were past the right knee. It was so plainly evident that the heel did not come up until it was absolutely forced to do so by the momentum of the swing. But enough of feet and legs for the time being.

During recent times there has been much discussion and not a little controversy in connection with what is termed the "shut" and the "open" face. I think by this time most golfers must have at least some idea as to what the "shut" and the "open" face means. But I should advise all golfers of a comparatively humble character not to worry their heads as to whether they are "shut" facers or "open" facers, as there are many fine golfers who utilise the open-face method, and, moreover, not a few who evidently prefer the shut-face principle; and to those who play with the "shut" face, and consider that it may be akin to a golfing sin, it may be some consolation to know that Mr. Jesse Sweetser, the youngster who recently won the American amateur championship in such a brilliant manner, happens to be one of those players who plays with an *aggravated* shut face.

In conclusion, I should advise all those who are wishful to improve their game to pay attention first of all to the question of developing a sound physical balance, as if you are in possession of this gift, your bad game will not be so very much worse than your good game; and in golf one of the main secrets is to create a method of swinging a club which precludes the great possibility of what are termed devastating errors, and a good sense of physical balance lends very much towards the attainment of this desired end.





THE MADCAP GALE

THE leaves were like a flock in flight,
The little straws did dance and skip
As though the wind for fond delight
Had linked each sprite in fellowship.

About the granite steeple old
Both leaves and little straws sang "Fie!"
They mocked the weathervane of gold,
"Poor cock a-cold that cannot fly!"

The little pools along the lane
Clapped shining hands, each pool an elf,
And in their mirrors it was plain
The sky was fain to mock itself.

And all the world with mirth was loud,
For all day long the wind did blow
Until the sun far down the cloud
Went sailing proud, a golden O.

And when the sun had left the air,
And all the sky seemed black as ink,
I looked again, and everywhere
I was aware of stars a-wink!

WILFRID THORLEY.

VALERIE FRENCH

By DORNFORD YATES

*Author of "Anthony Lyveden," "Berry and Co.," "Jonah and Co.,"
"The Brother of Daphne," etc.*

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS.—The great woodland estate of Gramarye, in the Cotswolds, was on fire, but when the news spread nobody cared, for the house was tumbling down, the park was deserted, and their owner, Colonel Winchester, was in a madhouse, to which local opinion held that he had been driven by some malign influence in this wilderness of a property. The mental breakdown of Anthony Lyveden while working for him was ascribed to the same cause. From a spur of the Cotswolds a man looked down upon the holocaust, but cared no more than anyone else, for he had lost his memory. Sitting at his feet was a small rough-haired dog for whose presence he could not account, and both were in the last stage of exhaustion when found, struggling on their way in search of food, by two privates of the R.A.S.C., in charge of a motor lorry, who sheltered and befriended them and gave them a lift to the next village. There the kindly landlord of an inn gave them hospitality, assuring Anthony Lyveden that he need not pay anything until able to do so. After bestowing upon himself and the Scalyham the names of "Jonathan" and "Hamlet," in his inability to remember even his own name, Anthony Lyveden and the dog, refreshed and grateful, set forth to seek their fortune. About this time Lady Touchstone wrote to her kinsman, Cardinal Forest, "Poor Anthony Lyveden's body was found a fortnight ago. We had him buried at Girdle," but, being on the Continent, she had not yet heard of the burning of Gramarye, and was referring to the search for Anthony, who had disappeared, and to the discovery of a dead body assumed to be his. She had gone abroad with her grief-stricken niece, Valerie French, who had been engaged to be married to Anthony, and at Dinard they made the acquaintance of an English girl, André Strongitharm—the *fiancée* of Colonel Winchester—who gave Valerie a profoundly moving account of Anthony's life and work at Gramarye, and of the baleful influence of the place upon his brain. A day later André was recalled to England by the news of Colonel Winchester's sudden recovery. Meantime Anthony Lyveden and his dog fell in with Sir Andrew Plague, K.C., upon the Oxford Road, and by this chance encounter Anthony made for himself a friend indeed. Rough and hot-tempered, but kindly, the famous lawyer took a liking to "Jonathan Wood," and, when he learned that, having lost all memory of his own identity, he was beginning life again, engaged him as his secretary.

III. FIGS OF THISTLES.

HERE is a letter, Sirs, out of a Cardinal's bag. His Eminence will not mind my setting it forth. I am a privileged person, like the King's jester.

Villa Narcisse,
Dinard.

August 3rd.

DEAR UNCLE JOHN,

It seems impossible that it is not yet one year since I wrote to tell you that I was in love with a footman. I remember writing so well. Just as in another year's time I shall remember writing this letter, which is to tell you—not that Anthony is dead, because you know that, or that I still love him, because you know that too, but that I am sane again and that the power of caring has come back. Of course my occupation is gone. I have not the slightest idea what to do. But I must and mean to do something—take some action of

some sort, and that is more than I could say a week ago.

It is, in fact, just five days since I fell in with a girl—a complete stranger—who was unhappy, too. Her trouble was that she was in love with my darling. She had no idea, of course . . . I don't think she knew he was dead. But she had been very hard hit, and—the clouds had returned after the rain.

I have stated the truth baldly. I do not feel able to comment. It is too big. Truly Fate is an amazing thing. Out of the millions of women—surplus women, Uncle John, of whom your niece is now one—this girl, a Miss Strongitharm, selects me for her peculiar confidence. . . . I owe her a debt. When I heard her mourning Anthony, it set my heart going again, and I was able to cry.

I think that's all my news, but I'd like your advice.

Tell me about the dead. Can they take

part in our lives, assuming they want to? Or are we too small fry? I mean, Death's really a promotion, isn't it? One's given a better brain. New lenses are fitted to our understanding, aren't they? Immensely more powerful. 'Now we see through a glass, darkly. . . .' Well, when those lenses have been fitted, how will this old life look? Shall we be

feel that he saw, felt, understood, perhaps even loved me, looking down from his peak, I think I'd be able to breast this terrible wave—I think I'd feel less famished than I do. I tell you I'm just starving. And Memory's bitter fare—very bitter . . .

Now that I've written all this, I see I've wasted our time. You can give me only one answer. It would be brutal to give me any other. Besides, you can only guess. You may be a Cardinal, but you're still alive and so as blind as all the rest of us. Your fine red hat was made in a tailor's shop, probably by sweated labour. The point is, it's a hat, not a halo.

No. I may have wasted your time, and I'm sorry for that: but I haven't wasted my own. I feel better for having got rid of all this sob-stuff. For that's all it is.

I am so glad you knew him—so awfully glad. He was so splendid, wasn't he?

Your loving,

VALERIE.

P.S.—I'll write again when I'm through this phase. I leave for London to-morrow, without Aunt Harriet. I won't let her come. I'd like to go to Bell Hammer, but I can't stand that . . . yet. I suppose you know he left me every penny. Which means that, with what I already had, I must be worth considerably over a million. Isn't that nice?

Yes, I know. But you must admit I've a lot to make me bitter.

Valerie French, spinster, was as good as her word. Ere her letter had reached Rome, she and her maid



Valerie French.

able to see it at all? Or will it be out of focus—beneath contempt?

You see what I'm driving at. I not only want Anthony—I need him. His is the only presence that can help me to stand his loss. I can't realise that he's dead—yet. But I shall soon. And I want his shoulder to lean on—the hem of his garment to clutch at when that realisation comes. It's like a wave approaching: already I can see its crest. If I could

had lain one night in London.

The following morning she left for the Cotswold Hills.

The impulse which drove her to Girdle was natural enough. It was, indeed, with the idea of visiting Lyveden's grave that she had left Dinard. She wanted to see where he rested, desperately. More. She was most pitifully thankful for an object in life. Never pilgrim journeyed to Canter-

bury one half so undistractedly. The girl had no need of tales to beguile the way. This was all too short. Had her shrine stood in the Antarctic Zone, she would have praised God. Once she found herself wondering what pilgrims do when they have made their pilgrimage. One heard of their going. Whoever heard of their return? Upon that point even Chaucer had broken down. . . . Clearly the return was empty, flat—an appalling anticlimax. For one thing, of course, they were no longer pilgrims. A frightened look came into Valerie's eyes. To-morrow her pilgrimage would end . . . to-morrow. And after that. . . . She was only twenty-six. Supposing she lived to be seventy. . . . She brushed the thought away and pictured her shrine anew.

This was much what she had figured—a low, green barrow, seamed across and across, where the late-cut turf had not healed. Valerie was directed to it by a mumbling sexton. She hardly heard what he said and forgot him, so soon as he had spoken, as one forgets a finger-post. The truth is, the girl was overwhelmed. She had hoped so hard that Anthony might lie in a pleasant place: she had never dared to dream that he was buried in a King's Corner.

The Abbey Church of Girdle stands a mile from the village in a most lovely yard. Its day is over, of course. The town it was built to serve has disappeared. Each Sunday a handful of worshippers plod resolutely to Matins, stare for an hour uncomfortably about their heritage, and go their way. Occasionally strangers appear, to glory in the flying buttresses, marvel at the fan-tracery above the quire, and swear the altar-screen an anthem wrung out of stone. For the rest, the great church sleeps, stately and exquisite, amid its whispering clms. As for its ancient retinue, with one superb exception, this is clean gone. Only the footings are left, to turn the shadowy plot into a close. One gentle spokesman of another age remains. There by the south-east corner three lovely arches tell where the cloisters ran. With these the afternoon sun will print three matchless windows upon a little greensward. There is only one grave there yet. And that lies under the silver birch—a low, green barrow, seamed across and across. . . .

After a long half-hour Valerie rose to her feet and sought the sexton. Ten minutes later she rang the Vicarage bell.

Here we are upon the edge of three several interviews, all of which were painful and are

relevant. Two, as you shall see, may be swallowed whole; but the third must be chewed. Bear with me, Sirs. He who would gather grapes of thorns must at least pick over the brambles.

The first interview—between Miss French and the Vicar of Girdle—took place at a quarter to one. It was distressing, as was the second, because the Reverend Simon Barley was not a lady's man. Moreover, he suffered, poor fellow, from St. Vitus's Dance and was acutely conscious of his infirmity. Both parties were very thankful when it was over.

The second—between Miss Strongi'th'arm and the Vicar of Girdle—took place at two o'clock. This ended abruptly with the slam of a door and left the unfortunate priest a nervous wreck.

The third—between Miss French and Miss Strongi'th'arm—took place at two-fifteen.

Valerie had lunched at Girdle and had returned on foot to the churchyard. Thither her car was to follow at half-past three.

The poor girl was almost cheerful. She had won sanctuary. Sitting on the turf of the cloister, marking the bulwarks of the grey old church, she found an ease of spirit she had not known for months. The old steady look began to steal into her eyes. The atmosphere of the place was ministering to her mind. Viewed from this belvedere, the scenery of Life became less desolate. Far in the distance stood peaks, which the sun was touching. . . .

Valerie took off her hat and, leaning her back against its delicate trunk, stared at the hanging garden which the silver birch made.

A footfall made her look down.

"You?"

Framed in one of the archways, Miss Strongi'th'arm was regarding her with burning eyes.

"You?" blazed André again. "What are you doing here?"

For a moment Valerie gravely returned her gaze. Then she rose and came forward.

"Of course you live near here," she said quietly. "I'd quite forgotten." With that, she put out her hand.

The other stared at this, biting her lip. Then she took it uncertainly.

"I'm sorry," she said jerkily. "You'll think I'm not safe to be about. The first time we meet I behave like an idiot child: and now, like—like a maniac." She laughed mirthlessly. "I suppose you know where you are . . . whose grave that is?"

"Yes," said Valerie.

André shot her a long and searching glance. Then she fixed her eyes upon an adjacent headstone.

When she spoke again, her voice was strained and low.

"It was my earnest desire to put up a memorial. . . . I went to see the Vicar ten minutes ago. . . . He tells me he's given permission to somebody else—some other woman." She paused. "I asked if she was a relative, and he said she had told him 'No.'"

"That's right," said Valerie quietly. "He gave it to me."

"So I was right," breathed André. She turned upon the other with smouldering eyes. "What's your imagined authority for doing this?"

"Major Lyveden and I were engaged."

Miss Strongi'th'arm stared.

"When?"

"At the time of his death."

"But he was mad."

Valerie shook her head.

"We got him all right," she said. "Apparently, perfectly well. It——"

"We? Who's 'we'?"

"His friends," said Valerie. "It was only right at the end that he had a relapse."

"D'you swear this?" demanded André.

"Of course."

"Why didn't you tell me at Dinard?"

"Until you opened your mouth, I hadn't the slightest idea. When you'd opened it, it was too late."

"Too late" to stop me telling my rival the details of how her lover had turned me down? She pointed to the grave at their feet. "I wonder what he'd think about it."

"He'd understand," said Valerie. "So would you, if you'd only think for a moment. I never dreamed, of course, I should ever see you again."

The other gave a short laugh.

"No," she said drily. "I don't suppose you did. One doesn't bother, as a rule, about a sucked orange."

Valerie lifted her eyes and stared at the tops of the elms.

"I'm sorry," she said gently, "you take it like this. God knows I meant you no harm."

"Then why did you let me talk—strip myself? Because you wanted to see my nakedness. You'd landed the wonderful thing I'd lost my heart to, and so my failure was interesting. . . . a posthumous titbit. . . . the hell of a feather in your cap. That I

was sticking it there was simply superb. You must have screamed when I'd gone."

"Do I look that kind of woman?"

"I wish you did," said André bitterly. "Then I'd 've held my tongue."

"You know I never laughed when you'd gone."

The other shrugged her shoulders.

"A woman who'll do such a rotten, shameless——"

"Why do you talk like this?" said Valerie. "Why are you so unfair? I never invited your confidence."

"You abused it."

"I never abused it. Listen. For one thing, you know I was ill—almost out of my mind."

"Rot," said André. "Your nerve was like iron."

"I say," repeated Valerie, "that I was almost mad. Anthony was dead. You find his loss hard enough. What d'you think it was—is to me? Well, you offered to tell me your tale, and I offered to listen. Suddenly, without any warning, I found you were giving yourself away. . . . I had to decide what to do—instantly. There was no time to think. I had to decide whether it was better to stop you—make things desperately awkward for both of us, and drive you wild with yourself for having spoken, or to let you go on and away without knowing who I was. I don't think I ever decided. While I was trying to think, you went on talking, until it was clearly too late."

"How could I help in the end finding out who you were?"

"It didn't seem likely then. I never expected to come to see his grave."

"Till after I'd spoken?"

Valerie nodded.

"I owe you a debt," she said. "When you spoke so handsomely——"

"Rub it in," said André.

With a gesture of despair, Valerie turned away.

"In fact," said André, "it was only when you found that there was someone who *cared*, living a couple of miles from where he lay. . . . someone whose *right to care* was technically smaller than your own. . . . some poor rotter who *might* be 'expected to come to see his grave,' that it occurred to you to use your authority and put up a grave-stone—'In Loving Memory.' After all, what's the use of a door marked 'Private' if you've nobody's face to slam it in?" She stamped her foot upon the ground. "Upon my soul, I wonder you don't order me out of this churchyard."

Valerie stepped to the birch and picked up her hat. Her face was very white, and when she spoke there was the chill of death in her tone.

"Before I go I'll tell you what you've done.

"I came here to-day, laden and desolate, after two solid months of horror, misery, and despair. And here, for the very first minute in all these frightful weeks, I felt at peace. The weight that was breaking me was taken: that awful, desolate feeling fell away.

Perhaps you can imagine the relief—after two solid months. I could have cried with gratitude. In fact, I did. Then I went to the village and took a room at the inn, so that I might be able to come here every day. . . .

"And now—you've smashed my sanctuary . . . sown it with stinging memories . . . poisoned the peace I found here . . . hunted me back into the night. . . . I tell you, you've robbed the destitute. You say you're poor. You fool. I *am* Poverty. And yet you've found a pocket in my rags—and rifled that."

She turned and passed out of the pleasance like a stricken queen. . . .

Her red lips parted, wide-eyed, the other watched her go, and, after she had gone, stared at her point of disappearance.

Presently her brown eyes narrowed, and she began to frown. . . .

* * * * *

It took a good deal to stagger Miss André Strongi'th'arm, but the trick had been done. For this, a finer personality, a blow from an unexpected quarter, and an air of frozen dignity were together responsible. She had been shaken much as a confident boxer may be shaken by the shock of the sudden punch of a better man. She walked home thoughtfully. . . .

That same night, in her chamber, she threw herself, dressed, on her bed



"Framed in one of the archways, Miss Strongi'th'arm was regarding her with burning eyes. 'You?' moment Valerie gravely

and considered her plight. Her windows were wide open, and from where she lay she could command the dark heaven, literally crammed with stars. These afforded, as ever, a majestic spectacle, conducive to meditation. Occasionally one of them would leave its place in the pageant and take its dying leap into eternity. . . . After a little André began to feel that Fate not only was pretty powerful, but possibly knew its job rather better than she.

For more than six dragging months she had been most deeply in love with Anthony Lyveden. Never once in all that time had she viewed this passion impersonally. It was, of course, a question of effort, purely : and the effort had never been made. She had let herself go—let herself love, dream, suffer. Six months ago she had stumbled upon a pool, sunlit, inviting. Without an instant's thought, she had flung herself in. . . . Soon the sunlight had gone and the waters begun to grow chill. She had stayed there desperately. Gradually the waters had become icy : but she would not come out, because they had once been warm and the sun had lighted them. To-night, for the very first time, she saw herself crouched in the pool, wide-eyed, frozen. . . . She was only just in time. A moment later the pool was empty.



blazed André again. 'What are you doing here?' For a returned her gaze."



A feeling of resignation stole into André's heart, as blood that has been congealed begins to liquefy.

The reason for this is plain.

The girl was a fine lover, handsome and careless. This morning she would have given her life to bring back Anthony, and given it gladly, without a thought. But to-night—no. She would not have crooked a finger. This morning she would have asked no questions, made no conditions, but would have gone to the block with the shining eyes of a zealot. To-night she would have seen eternity end before she brought him back for another woman. André was neither selfish nor unselfish. She was just human.

Continuing to look through her new, impersonal lens, she perceived that Lyveden's death had been predestinate. This discovery relieved her immensely. Till now she had always felt that she might have saved him. The millstone of self-condemnation began to slip from her neck. . . . Still using this comfortable lens, she found it perfectly manifest that Anthony was not for her, because he was for no woman. This finding

was more than a relief: it was a positive cordial.

The glow of resignation began to course through André's veins, as blood which has got going begins to circulate.

Staring up at the regalia of Destiny, it struck her that Anthony Lyveden had crossed her path like one of those falling stars, flooding her life with his radiance, dragging her heart with him in his dying leap. Pondering the truth of this simile, André found him ethereal, made of the silver stuff of dreams, a prince passing. The man began to change into a memory—a most important transition.

Out of the highway of Life there runs a sable lane whose name is Mourning. Down this we, that are quick, walk with our blessed dead. Sooner or later, Sirs, the lane will bend—sooner or later. And there, at the turn, the dead enter in at the gate which is that of Memory, but we, that are quick, pass on, and lo! an instant later, we are back upon the old highway.

When Anthony became a memory, André came out of mourning. The prince had passed.

After all, our emotions are nothing more than a set of hooks on which we hang things. And Lyveden had been transferred from the hook of passionate love to that of affectionate remembrance. Of this the direct result was that the hook of passionate love was now unoccupied. Nature abhors a vacuum. Miss Strongi'th'arm's nature went further. Her hook of passionate love *had* to be filled. Never in all her life had it gone spare. Dolls had hung there. So had horses, often. Dogs, dancing, Donegal, men—one after another, these had been tenants at will—a very uncertain will. But that is beside the point, which is, as I have hinted, that the hook was now empty. . . .

André switched on the light and slid off the bed. Then she crossed to her table and opened a drawer.

Here lay a letter which had arrived that morning.

Sitting upon the edge of the table, she re-read it carefully.

MY DEAR ANDRÉ,

They tell me you know that I am well, but that, after all you have been through, you do not feel able to see me just yet. I am not surprised. (Remember, I can only take their words literally, without trying to read something which may or may not be written between

the lines.) I neither know nor desire to know the circumstances of my loss of reason—I am told that it was caused by overwork at that place which was recently burned, Gramarye—but, however it came about, the shock to you must have been awful.

You see, my dear girl, I know that when my mind was taken you and I were engaged.

That my love for you should have survived my illness, is not surprising. I was, in a sense, less affected than anyone else. But I want you to know, André, that it has survived, and that I can think of no one else.

Whether you love me still, is another matter. You may. If you do not, I can most perfectly understand. Possibly you may not know whether you do or not.

In any event, write to me candidly: and what you wish, my lady, that I will do. If you think it better, I will keep away—for a while, or for ever. If you would like to see me, I will come—as a friend. If . . .

André, my darling, I have tried to write dispassionately. In return, don't let me down. Tell me the absolute truth, however harsh it may be. It's far kinder.

Always,
RICHARD WINCHESTER.

Now, André believed firmly in going whither the winds of Fate were minded to carry her. How little she practised this faith she was sublimely unconscious. She was fully persuaded and often averred with conviction that she had done so all her life. As a matter of hard fact, she went where she listed: and the winds of Fate had usually to work themselves into a hurricane before she became aware that any suggestion was being made. In the present case a whole gale had been driving for over twelve hours.

Only two people knew that her engagement with Richard had been broken off. Of these, one—Anthony—was dead, while the other—Richard himself—had forgotten. 'When my mind was taken, you and I were engaged.' Probably they were. That night when she had flung down her ring he was already mad—obviously.

Of her affair with Anthony, of course, he knew nothing at all. As likely as not, he did not remember Lyveden. 'That place which was recently burned.' *That place . . .*

There was no doubt about it. By an amazing accident the clock had been put back, and André was being offered her 'time' over again. The question was, whether to accept it or no.

André flung back her head and stared at the light.

Richard . . . Richard Winchester . . . normal, was a most splendid being. She had been crazy about him—till she had met Lyveden. When he had asked her to marry him, it had been the proudest moment of her life. . . .

Harlequin-like, the scene flashed into her mind, gallant and glittering. The two were riding home after a hunt. It was a mild evening, and the rain, which had been falling, had slackened and died. With no wind to carry it, the smell of the soaking earth rose up sweet and lingering. On either side of them a beechwood gave back the jingle of bits and the hollow slap of hoofs. Far down the silent road an early light was whipping on the dusk. . . . Suddenly Richard had leaned forward and caught her bridle. 'Will you marry me, André?' 'I will.' Without a word he had lifted her out of her saddle and gathered her in his arms. Then he had kissed her mouth and set her upon his saddle-bow. . . .

André closed her eyes and drew in her breath.

Of course he needed a job—a job which would give him a chance to use his amazing powers. Big-game hunting, for instance. If she had realised that twelve months ago, things might have been different. But she had not. She had resented the way in which he had courted occupation. All the time it had been the man's nature. She might as well have been jealous of his appetite. . . . If the clock had been put back, not so her experience. She had been shown most clearly what cards to play. Big-game hunting. . . . Well, she would love that. That was a job she could enter into heartily. And if Richard hadn't much money—why, she was rich. . . .

André began to appreciate that she was a most fortunate girl. She had come an unearthly cropper, and—the record had been expunged. Not a living soul was aware—yes. One was. Not that she mattered, still. . . .

Which brought her to Valerie French.

A faint frown of vexation gathered on André's brow.

"I am a fool," she said sharply. "A headstrong fool. I had no case at all. If I'd liked to show her my cards, it wasn't her fault. All the same. . . ." She gnawed at her underlip. "I am a fool," she repeated. "I suppose she thinks I don't know any better. There, of all places. . . . I wish to

Heaven I'd pulled myself together before—before she went. Of course she thinks I'm just rank. *She*, of all people—to think that of me." André flushed red with mortification. "With what I told her at Dinard and then what I did to-day— Oh, of course she thinks it. She must. So would anyone. It's just like shouting 'I'm rank. I'm the cheapest, rankest bounder you ever saw.' Hell! Why was I such a fool? Such a rotten fool?"

She stepped to a box by her bed and took out a cigarette. When she had lighted this, she flung herself into a chair.

"I shall have to see her," she said. "Somehow. Barley's probably got her address. Yes. That's the only thing to do. I can't leave things as they are—possibly."

It was, of course, a question of self-respect. While Valerie did not respect her, André could not possibly respect herself. This was unbearable. That her own respect should depend on that of somebody else, was humiliating. That it should depend upon that of her idol's darling, made André writhe. In a mad moment she had pawned her dignity. Now, at whatever cost, this must be redeemed.

That she was quite unrepentant must not be charged to her account. Fate had been rough with her. That she should have chosen Valerie to be her confidante was most outrageous fortune. What had resulted, if distressing, was natural enough. At two-fifteen that day Miss Strong's arm had had no reason to believe that she was not upon dry ground. At two-fifteen and a half she had made the unpleasant discovery that the ground was not dry at all, but a particularly odious slough, in which she had for some eight days been standing up to her knees. Few girls would not have floundered. André's mettlesome nature had sent her in up to her neck. Incidentally, it was the same vehement spirit which was now peremptorily demanding to be released from this plight. Mettle is a good subject, but, as an autocrat, apt to cost rather more than he is worth. The cheques he draws upon Humiliation are cruelly fat. It is good to think that in Miss Strong's arm's case these were invariably honoured.

André tossed her cigarette into the night and began to make ready for sleep. . . .

Before nine o'clock the next morning she sent a telegram.

This was addressed to Winchester and was most eloquently brief.

Come.

Valerie's sudden decision to keep a diary was a desperate move. She was prompted by much the same motive as prompted political prisoners who were not sculptors to carve the walls of their cells. She *had* to do something. But, since she was not a diarist and never could be, she kept it only so long as there was nothing—to her mind—worth recording. Indeed, this fragment ends abruptly upon the fifth day. After all, I will wager that such political prisoners as were eventually released alive did not keep up their carving.

August 7th.—Breakfast at nine. Tried to decide whether to return to Dinard or not. Couldn't. Wrote to Aunt Harriet and said I was staying in Town and would wire before I left. Asked her to try and think of some 'Professions for Girls.' I cannot get that sordid business of yesterday out of my head. Is everything to be denied me? I've only to scratch up some wretched, miserable crumbs, for these to be taken away. I feel like the prisoner who managed to tame a rat; and then one day they found him feeding his pet, and killed it. The flat needs decoration. Made up my mind to send for — to-morrow. But I shall not. What is the good? We may not ever come here again. Even if we do. . . . Walked in the Park before luncheon. Something impelled me to ring up Daphne Pleydell. Happily, she was out of Town. Of course, everyone is. Luncheon—a solitary meal. Pity the idle rich. Then I had the car round and drove into Hertfordshire—to The Dogs' Home. The superintendent seemed pleased to see me again. I was a fool to go. I was a bigger fool to have tea at *The Leather Bottel*. Even they remembered me. They also remembered Joe . . . and Patch . . . and him. I never asked. They just rambled on and dragged them all into the fairy tale. I came home and dined in melancholy state. Afterwards I tried to read, but I could only think. Why did I leave Dinard? I am getting frightened. This loneliness makes me afraid. Yet I cannot go back. I can't face the villa again. That girl was there, for one thing. Besides. . . .

August 8th.—I think waking is the worst time of all. For a fraction of a second, after I'm awake, everything's rosy and golden. Then, with a paralysing shock, I remember. . . . What a cruel thing Life is! Every morning now, for nearly a month, I have been informed most bluntly that my darling is dead. And every morning I am stunned with the awful news. I suppose I must be

thankful that I sleep as well as I do. This morning I rang up Forsyth. He begged me to come and see him. I promised to go to-morrow. I dread it terribly. Sole legatee, sole executrix. The misery it means. I shall tread the steps he trod—that awful day: sit in the chair he sat in: use the same pen. The clerks will stare at me. Forsyth will temper the wind to the shorn lamb. He'll think he's doing it beautifully—he's done it so often. . . . And I shall sit and watch him, just as one watches a photographer moving his screens about. A letter from Betty Alison came by the second post. A very sweet note. I feel I should like to see her, but of course she can't get away. And I daren't go to Hampshire. *Dear old Val*, she says, *we think of you all day long. Lift up your beautiful head. Don't say there's nothing to lift it up for. Lift it up and wait.* I must try. After luncheon I put on a coat and skirt and drove to Richmond Park. I tramped all over it for hours. I should like to be able to say it did me good. It didn't. Coming home, I saw a dog run over—rather like Patch. The owner—a little girl—was like a mad thing. I took her home in the car with the dead dog clasped in her arms. . . . It is obvious that I am to be spared nothing. Soon I shall be afraid to go out. I spent a bad evening and was thankful to go to bed.

August 9th.—I went to Lincoln's Inn Fields. Forsyth was very kind—not at all what I had expected. If he moved any screens about, I didn't see it going on. He said I must try to regard him as an old family butler—four-fifths servant and one-fifth friend. He showed me the Will—a very short document. Another longer one had been prepared, to be signed after our marriage. I saw this, too. There was really no difference, except that there was a memorandum attached to this, suggesting that, if I liked, I should give George and Betty and Anne ten thousand apiece and Slumper two hundred a year until his death. Of course I shall do this delightedly, as soon as ever I can. I came home to luncheon, not so much comforted as relieved. I am very fortunate in Forsyth. What a misleading thing anticipation is! The wind you dread turns out a zephyr. The wind you hail cuts like a knife. After luncheon I wrote to Aunt Harriet and said I was coming back—probably to-morrow. I cannot stand it here. All the same, I dread Dinard. Perhaps, because I dread it, it won't be so bad. If only she wasn't so comfortable

there, I would suggest Paris. For some inexplicable reason I don't want to go far afield. Then I went to the Wallace Collection—rather desperately. I felt that awful depression coming on. I stayed there till I was turned out. Fragonard's *Villa d'Este* and Rembrandt's *Landscape* did me a lot of good. I kept going back to them. I came in to find a letter from Uncle John—very short, very wise, very honest. *My dear, I am not going to risk my position, as your adviser, by giving you valueless advice. For one thing, you are no fool, and, for another, I love you too well. I can only say this. Do not lose heart. Refuse to let yourself go. There is, I know, a breaking point. Nine girls out of ten would have been broken by now. But you, if you please, need not be broken at all. I tell you, I cannot think of any calamity which could subdue your high spirit, if only you opposed its assault. There lies the danger—that you will let yourself go. You are tired of holding on. Of course. Remember, there is always one more ounce of resistance left in us than we believe. It seems a pity not to use it. Why? Because, if you use it, you will come through . . . and out . . . into the light.* 'Into the light.' Then there is light ahead. I'm thankful I didn't ask him, because I should have suspected his reply. But he would never volunteer a lie. I am going to bed more hopefully than I have for weeks and weeks. 'Into the light.'

August 10th.—This morning arrived a letter from André Strongi'th'arm. The moment I saw the writing I knew it was hers. And I felt cold. *Ashamed of my barbarous behaviour . . . cannot rest till I have seen you. . . . I am very much changed . . . my eyes have been opened. . . . I know I'm asking a lot, but will you see me? If you are in London, I'm coming up on Thursday for two or three days. Will you send me a line to the Berkeley?* I'm glad in a way she wrote, but I don't want to see her at all. Why can't she leave it at that? It isn't as if we were friends. There's nothing to be made up. Now that she's written, the incident ought to be closed. Yet she's keeping it open—setting her foot in the door. Why? I suppose she wants to show me she can behave. As if I cared. The obvious thing to do is to leave for France. I had meant to to-day. But I don't want to go, and after Uncle John's letter I felt I could stay. . . .

I went to the Wallace Collection again this morning. I might as well have stayed in the flat. That wretched letter kept cropping up all the time. I don't want to see

her, and yet I suppose I must. After luncheon I took the two-seater and drove down the Portsmouth Road. I shan't do it again. I found the traffic a strain, and London's too big. By the time you're out of it you're tired. At least, I am. This is the first sign of age I've seen in myself. I welcome it. Dinner—a ghastly meal, because I knew after dinner I must decide. I've tried to argue it out—for and against. I couldn't get far. The only thing against seeing her is that I don't want to. On the other side, I don't want to seem to be keeping it up. (Keeping what up? I can't recognise any hostility. I've never drawn my sword.) Besides, if I see her, I can snuff the whole thing out. After a lot of hesitation, I wrote and asked her to come on Friday at twelve. After all, when the morning comes, I can send her a wire. But I shan't. I know I shall see her. What does it matter? I think everybody would say that in this I was at perfect liberty to please myself. Even Uncle John. Yet I'm not going to, and I am right. I feel instinctively that I am right. I suppose it's another phase—a draught's only got to be nasty to be worth drinking. Late as it was, I took the letter to the post—to make certain. I suppose I am right.

August 11th.—I have had a bad day. Anthony is dead. Years—centuries ago I made a terrible mistake. I paid most heavily. Then I paid again—most heavily. Each time I thought the debt was settled. Each time I was wrong. I was paying the pence . . . the shillings. The pounds were to come. And now I have paid the pounds. I hold the receipt. It came before breakfast this morning. *The Executors of the late Major Lyveden, Bell Hammer. Dr. to Benjamin Punch, Saddler, 7, Castle Street, Brooch. June 9th. To Dog's Collar, 4s. 8d.* Anthony is dead. Yet everything is just the same. Boys have been whistling in the street, cars have swept on their way, and once a band passed. I know. I have not been out. Of course I do not expect the world to stand still, but *there is no difference.* This frightful tragedy does not count. Is it nothing to them? Nothing. They don't know. If they knew, they wouldn't care. Betty says, 'We think of you all day long.' Yes, but they eat just as well. They're just as put out if they run out of jam. No jam—and Anthony is dead. Can such a hideous catastrophe be so confined? Is it possible? Yes. Outside the room I sit in, it doesn't count. I think I must have some straw put down outside in the street. Then when people go by they'll

toss a thought to the dying person inside. There will be no dying person. That doesn't matter. The straw will make them think. I must make people realise that there's something wrong. This present frightful indifference is unendurable.

I had breakfast. I had luncheon. I had dinner. The thought of that interview to-morrow has driven me nearly mad. Yet I must go through with it. 'Lift up your head.' 'Refuse to let yourself go.' 'One more ounce.' I suppose to-morrow will bring the breaking-point. But I shan't break. Why? Because I *can't* break. I'm not naturally made. There's some terrible stuff in my composition which can stand any strain. The hell I go through doesn't matter. My mind may be twisted and wrenched, but it will not give way. It's like those rag-books—untearable.

A letter from Aunt Harriet arrived this evening—a kind, rational letter, full of good things. But they are wasted on me. I am too wretched. It shows that my absence has done her a lot of good. Which is hardly surprising. I'm glad I didn't go back. Poor woman, by now she has my letter, saying I'm coming. I must send her a wire to-morrow, that she may breathe again. I must be terrible company. I have read the letter again. I can see that its wit is brilliant, but I cannot smile. The salt has lost its savour. Anthony is dead.

Ten o'clock is striking. Only another hour, and, with any luck, I shall be asleep—until to-morrow. That's the awful part—'until to-morrow.' I'm never out of it. My bed has been brought into the torture-chamber. I have slept there for weeks. And I shall. I do not see that I shall ever come out any more. How can I? Anthony is dead.

* * * * *

As André turned into Hill Street, a neighbouring clock began to announce mid-day. Three minutes later she was seated in a cool morning-room, looking composedly about her.

She had come, as we know, to regain Valerie's respect. This was not her hope, but her intention. It had never occurred to her that she might fail of her quest. Delicate mission as this was, she had thought out nothing to say. The time would provide the sentences. . . .

Sitting on the arm of a chair, she surveyed the tip of a little patent-leather shoe with infinite satisfaction. There was no

doubt about it, — made the best shoes in London. . . .

Then the door was opened, and Valerie came in.

I think it was the quiet, grave smile which hung in those tired blue eyes that knocked Miss Strongi'th'arm out.

Be that as it may, it is quite certain that she was greeted, shaken hands with, and quietly thanked for her letter, before she could try to speak, and it is equally indisputable that, when her hostess had finished and was standing silent, André stood in front of her, nervously wringing her gloves and trying without success to use her tongue.

"Let's sit down," said Valerie. André did as she was bid. "And now please tell me your news. I'm sure from your letter it's good, and I'd like to hear it."

"You—you've made it seem very small," said André slowly. "It seemed important when I wrote, but now I'm ashamed to tell it." She hesitated. "After all, what am I to you? What if I did care about you—the man who was engaged to you?"

"Did care?"

"Did. I see my mistake. I shall always remember him with a grateful heart—as your affianced husband. I am very lucky. Richard loves me, you know, and I'm going to marry him. He's quite himself again—speaks of Gramarye as 'that place.' He hasn't mentioned . . . Major Lyveden. I don't think he remembers him."

"Please call him Anthony," said Valerie. "And why should you think that the fact that you cared about him would mean nothing to me?"

"Oh, I don't know," said André, looking away. "I expect a good many girls cared about him, if the truth were known. But that's their pigeon," she added, with a half-hearted laugh. "The general doesn't know every soldier."

"You'd like me to like Richard."

"I wouldn't like it if you rammed the fact down my throat and, when he was dead, came and heckled me at the graveside."

There was a moment's silence.

Then—

"That's very handsome of you," said Valerie, quietly. "And I'm awfully glad you're going to marry Colonel Winchester. I didn't know he was well."

"You know that Gramarye's burned?"

"I heard so at Girdle."

"The day it was burned out, his mind came back."

Valerie stiffened suddenly and went dead white.

After a long minute, she drew in her breath sharply and bowed her head. . . .

A thoroughly frightened André fell on her knees.

"What have I said?" she cried. "What have I said?"

For a moment Valerie made no answer at all.



"A thoroughly frightened André fell on her knees. 'What have I said?' she cried. 'What have I said?'"

Then—

"Oh, nothing," she said quietly. "Only . . . only it seems a pity that it wasn't burned a little earlier . . . before—Anthony—died."

"My God!" said André. And then again, "My God!" She buried her face in her hands. "I never meant it," she breathed. "I swear I didn't. It never occurred to me. Oh, what a fool I am! What a poisonous, blundering fool! I came to try and repair what I did last week. I've made it a million times worse. I've . . ."

Her voice broke and she began to weep passionately.

'One more ounce . . . one more ounce. . .'

The words danced before her, searing Valerie's brain. It occurred to her that they were a satire upon her misery—a sham, a cheat, a trick of the torture-chamber. They were the carrot hung in front of the donkey's nose—the grapes of Tantalus—the national anthem of the damned. 'One more ounce.' Then the words stopped dancing and fell into step with the tick of the Vulliamy clock beside the fireplace. 'One more—one more—always—one more. . .'. André's sobs got in the way of the rhythm, and Valerie wished she would stop. She began to beat time with her foot, to try to preserve the sober, measured tread . . . Suddenly the words stopped marching and came to rest. The fine, firm handwriting of Cardinal Forest appeared, with the phrase set in its context at the top of the sheet. *Remember, there is always one more ounce of resistance left in us than we believe.* And there, a little lower down, *into the light.* . . .

With a tremendous effort, Valerie lifted up her head.

"It's not your fault," she said gently. "I was bound to know one day. Besides, it's nothing new. The whole affair is studded with the words 'If only.' Every tragedy is. That's what makes a tragedy."

Still sobbing, André shook her head.

"You'd never 've known," she waived, "if I hadn't told you. If I hadn't come to-day, you'd 've been spared that." She dropped her hands and looked up at Valerie's face. "You do know I didn't mean it?" she added desperately.

"Of course I do," said Valerie. "I don't bear you the slightest grudge for—for anything."

"You do, you do. You must. You wouldn't be human if—"

"I don't," said Valerie. "As I live, I don't. Because there's a curse on me, that

isn't your fault." She laughed bitterly. "Tell me of Colonel Winchester. I know a little about him, but not very much."

André started and glanced at the watch on her wrist.

"I think I've lost my balance," she said, wiping her eyes. "I did a senseless thing. He had to go into the City, and I told him to call for me here at half-past twelve. I'm afraid I felt I'd like you to see him. I actually thought it might interest you."

"So it will," said Valerie.

André got upon her feet.

"How can it possibly?" she said. "You can't say anything else. I'm afraid I'm very self-centred," she added miserably, "as well as an awful fool. And now I'm going. I'm frightfully, terribly sorry for all I've done, and I'll never forgive myself for—"

Here the door was opened, and a servant came in.

"Colonel Winchester."

A man like a Viking was ushered into the room.

Confusedly, André introduced him.

Valerie and he shook hands.

"I'm afraid I'm late," he said, in a steady, deep voice. "You said 'a quarter past twelve.'"

"Half past," corrected André.

"Did you? That's a relief." He turned to Valerie. "I hate being late, Miss French. But while I was driving up Fleet Street I saw a man I knew going into the Temple. By the time I was out of the cab he was out of sight, and I wasted a quarter of an hour trying to find him. I shouldn't have bothered, but I've not many friends, and he was a very good chap." He turned again to André. "I don't think you ever met him. Lyveden. His name was. He was with me at—"

The sentence stopped in its stride, and Winchester stared at his audience with a dropped jaw.

Valerie was standing, shaking, with a hand to her brow. André had shrunk against her and was clutching her arm. The eyes of both were starting out of their heads.

"B-but he's *dead*!" shrieked André. "He's dead! He's buried at Girdle."

"Dead?" shouted Winchester. "Nonsense! I'd know him anywhere. Besides, he had his dog with him—a Sealyham, with a big, black patch on his back. And he heard me call his master, though Lyveden didn't. He turned and looked about him, the moment he heard my voice."

The fourth instalment of this story will appear in the next number.



THE RAINBOW

IN sheets of silver swept the rain
Across the down and o'er the hill,
And o'er the village yet again,
And the bird's song was still.



We stood together, you and I,
Beneath a barn for shelter driven;
A rainbow flash'd across the sky,
And we were caught to heaven.

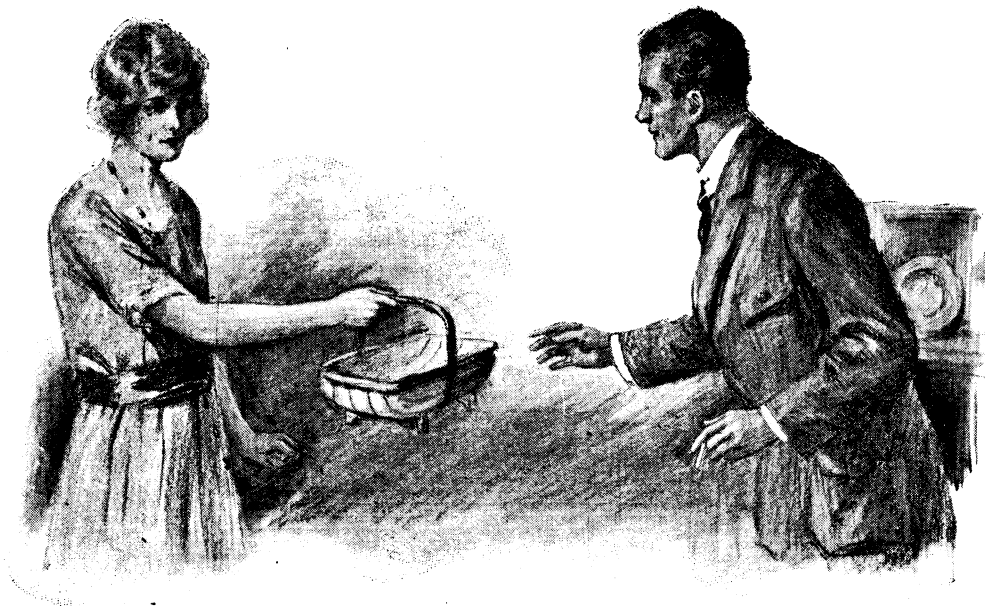


A triple flaming arch it spread
An unbroken glory o'er the sky,
We gazed, but never a word we said,
So mute were you and I.



But soul to soul spoke silently,
And, like a throbbing pain,
Born of a sudden ecstasy,
The bird was heard again.

KATHARINE HUSSEY.



"'Thank you so much,' she said, and handed him the basket at arm's length."

AN EPISODE IN ARCADY

By A. M. BURRAGE

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

ARCADY is not the real name of the place. Address a letter there, and it will return to you, after three or four years, through that brisk department of the G.P.O. which is so aptly called the Dead Letter Office. Nor am I anxious for others to know the exact place on the map, for until now we have been spared the curse of the motor coach. Juggernauts laden with strange people, wearing comic noses and throwing streamers, have not yet arrived to scare away our fairies. For in this Arcady of which I write there are still fairies, although we do not submit them to the indignity of the camera.

How do I know that there are fairies? Mark what happened to Hubert Anston, and then say who but a fairy could have brought such a thing about. Who but a good

fairy with a spice of mischief in her would attach a fish hook to a lady's skirt?

Hubert Anston was staying at the Bell Inn, Arcady, a hostelry so old-fashioned that it is quite a common occurrence to find hops in the beer. Visitors at "The Bell" sleep between lavender-scented sheets, are charged a very moderate number of shillings a day, and are permitted to fish for some three miles in a stream which we will call the Linney. The Linney is one of the few English streams containing real trout which have not yet been poisoned by the road tar.

Behold on an April morning young Hubert Anston climbing about the steep banks of this little river, carrying the flimsiest of split-cane rods and making occasional casts in the direction of rising

fish. The Linney is no easy stream to fish, for there is much overhanging foliage, and nothing delights a certain sort of fairy more than to catch a fly in mid-air behind the angler's back and attach it firmly to the fibrous part of a leaf. Anston was getting used to this sort of thing, but, being on the whole a very good young man, he said nothing worse than you or I would have said.

It was a perfect morning, warm as a June day, blue above and green below, and not a cloud in the sky. All the birds were singing as if they had not a care between them in the world, even those which had taken upon themselves the responsibility of fourteen eggs. And in the fields all round Anston could hear, like the May Queen, the bleating of the lamb. It was the sort of April day of which we all dream and seldom see.

Two small trout reposed among dewy grass in Anston's creel. Although our Linney trout are the most delicious in the world and the fiercest fighters, they run small. A half-pounder is a good fish; pounders exist, but the veracity of those who say they have caught them is under a cloud for ever afterwards.

Now, our fish in the Linney are gentlemen of taste, and nothing at that time of year but March Browns and Blue Uprights will tempt their appetites. That, after all, is reasonable enough. One does not eat oysters in July. But this morning the Blue Upright happened to be the only lure, and this was causing young Anston some anxiety. He was seven miles from the nearest fishing-tackle shop, and had but one Blue Upright left, and as he was continually fouling branches, he was in imminent danger, at every cast, of losing it.

It was while he was poisoning himself precariously to throw his fly at a six-ounce fish, which was feeding busily under the opposite bank, that the mischievous fairy grew tired of the old sport of making him foul the trees and bushes, and invented a variation of it. Anston felt the rod bend in his hand with the line taut behind him. The winch began to squeal as some line ran through his fingers. Murmuring below his breath, he turned to see what his Blue Upright had attached itself to on this occasion. He had the surprise of his young life.

She had been gathering wild flowers, and had come up behind him so quietly in the dewy grass that he had not heard her

approach. Her back was towards him now, and she was moving slowly away. She was an elderly lady, tall and angular, with iron-grey hair. The fly had attached itself by the hook to the hem of her tweed skirt.

Anston called out at once in a tone of laughing apology.

"Excuse me, madam," he cried, "I'm most awfully sorry—I'm afraid I've hooked your dress."

The lady took no notice whatsoever. She moved on with a stately dignity, her gaze bent upon her posy of primroses and daffodils. Feeling something tug at her skirt, she hitched it sharply with one hand, and Anston had to let out some more line to prevent the cast from breaking.

"Excuse me," he called out in a much louder tone, "I'm so sorry! 'Fraid I hooked your dress."

The lady neither spoke nor looked round. It seemed to Anston that she slightly increased her pace. He had a hand now on the handle of the reel, and let out more line, playing her as if she were some monstrous fish.

The situation was really provoking. Evidently the lady attributed the blame to him, and declined to stop or even discuss the matter. She intended walking off with his one Blue Upright, and thereby spoiling his morning's fishing. Anston grew slightly annoyed. He was blowed if she should.

Now, the gut cast was the finest that the manufacturers of fishing tackle place upon the market. Fish of half a pound need skilful handling on such a thread of hair. It was never intended to hold a ten-stone lady. He let out some more line while he thought the matter out. Then he followed her, expostulating.

The lady continued to take no notice. All she did was to hitch her skirt rather peevishly from time to time, as one who walks among bramble bushes. Anston had to be ready for these movements, and got some of the thrill of angling out of circumventing them by the letting out of line. He began to gain on her, reeling in as he went.

The lady had left the river bank, and taken a footpath towards a stile set in the midst of a high hedge. Behind her followed the disgruntled angler, addressing her in tones of pained reproach.

"Really, madam, you know, that's my last fly! It really wasn't my fault. If I had had any idea that anyone was close behind me——"

He was almost up to her by the time she had reached the stile. She was even preparing to mount it, when a vision came in sight from behind the hedge, a girl in white, with cornfield-coloured hair and cornflower-blue eyes. She addressed the elderly lady in a manner which made Anston jump. She fairly screamed at her.

"Oh, auntie, I thought I'd missed you! What a lovely lot of daffies!"

"Auntie" also seemed to be blessed with a powerful voice. She replied in a tone which could be heard half-way across a five-acre field.

"Yes, my dear, aren't they sweet? It's my imagination, I expect, but something seems to be tugging at my skirt. It makes me feel quite jumpy."

During this speech the girl suddenly became aware of Anston's presence, and stared at him curiously.

"This lady," he said, lifting his cap, "seems intent upon eloping with my last fly. It is the last, or it wouldn't matter. I can assure you that it wasn't my fault that I managed to hook her skirt. I had no idea that anybody was behind me when I cast."

The girl made a little quick grimace, as if she wanted to laugh and did not like to.

"My aunt," she said, "is rather deaf. I am afraid——"

The elder lady, seeing her niece's lips moving, turned to discover the cause, and beheld Anston for the first time. She seemed mystified at finding herself attached to him by three or four yards of line. Trembling with an effort to repress the sudden mirth which welled up within him, he asked permission to remove the hook.

"I'm afraid," said the old lady, "you'll have to shout if you want me to hear."

He repeated himself at the top of his voice, and, having received a gracious permission to remove the hook, dropped down upon one knee and did so. They then apologised stentoriantly to one another.

Anston had ever a keen sense of the ludicrous. Some fairy at his christening have given him a taste for the whimsical, another the gift of easy laughter. But there were times when the gift was an embarrassment, and this was one of them.

Somehow the smiling April day, the girl in white who was like Spring incarnate—a Proserpine without tears—the deaf old lady, and the ridiculous situation, seemed all blent together into some shapeless

delight. What was it? An idyll with too much laughter? Or a joke lifted up to the height of beauty?

"May I ask," said the girl, and with a slight choke, "if you followed my aunt all the way from the river?"

"Yes," he answered, avoiding her gaze. "You see, it was my last Blue Upright. And—er—your aunt did not hear my apologies and requests that I might remove it."

The girl constructed a mental picture of the scene.

"I should have liked to see you!" she exclaimed, and broke down.

The spell was broken; on the instant all three of them were laughing, the old lady, if not the loudest, with at least as much relish as the younger pair. She had produced an ear-trumpet, and the hand that held it jogged like a fiddler's elbow. Anston leaned upon his rod and tried to recover himself by remembering all the stories he had heard of people who had died of laughing.

To recover gravity after such a bout of merriment is a slow process. No sooner was silence restored, and all three had gasped and started to wipe their eyes, than one relapsed into laughter and infected the other two. They stopped at last from sheer weakness.

Nothing breeds familiarity so quickly as mirth. Anston was given a delightful sense of being with strangers who were already friends. He addressed the receptive end of the ear-trumpet.

"In the circumstances," he said, "will you permit me to introduce myself? We have had such a good laugh together that I see I am forgiven for hooking your dress."

The elder lady bowed.

"And I see I am forgiven for trying to rob you of your tackle, Mr.——"

"Anston."

"I am Miss Paley. This is my niece, Miss Letitia Paley."

He bowed to them each in turn. Dear, fragrant, old-world name, Letitia! A little too old, perhaps, for this girl in white, whose eyes still streamed with mirth; but perhaps she was called Letty by her friends. He found out a moment later that this was so.

"I have been for a walk to gather flowers," said Miss Paley, a little superfluously, "and Letty had arranged to come and meet me. Perhaps it was just as well."

He agreed with her most cordially in that.

"If you have run short of flies," said Letty, "perhaps we can come to the rescue. My brother, who comes down as often as he can, has left a big box of them at home.

Anston's heart jumped at the invitation. "I don't want to rob Mr. Paley," he said, "but I should like to borrow half a dozen Blue Uprights, if you will let me



... having received a gracious permission to remove the hook, dropped down upon one knee and did so."

I don't know one sort from another, but——"

"We live very close here," Miss Paley interrupted, "and if Mr. Anston doesn't mind walking along with us, he can help himself."

replace them when I have some more sent to me."

"Come along, then," said the sprightly Miss Paley; "you are very welcome. Perhaps you are interested in old china, Mr. Anston? I have some old Worcester

and Lowestoft I am very proud of." Anston, who did not know the difference between Wedgwood and Crown Derby, declared himself to be an enthusiast. But whatever interest he lacked in old Worcester he made up in interest in Letty. The fairy, who had been playing tricks on him all the morning, was not, after all, one of the spiteful kind.

He accompanied the ladies to a charming half-timber cottage a quarter of a mile distant, on the edge of a wood of young saplings, and sat lost in admiration for a cool panelled hall, with great rough old beams running the length of the low ceiling. From there he was taken into the smallest and prettiest drawing-room he had ever been in, and shown the treasured Lowestoft and old Worcester. He said it was beautiful, but he was gazing at Letty's profile while he spoke.

Letty disappeared for a minute and returned with a large tin box full of artificial flies, all in little grease-proof envelopes as if they were so many foreign stamps. Anston took what he wanted, and reluctantly prepared to go. A happy inspiration seized him as he was thanking them and saying "Good-bye."

"Do you care for trout, Miss Paley?" he asked.

It seemed that they both did, but were unwilling to deprive him of the spoils of the chase.

"That's settled, then," he said, laughing. "I shall bring you some for breakfast to-morrow."

II.

ANSTON fished industriously all the afternoon of that day, and was up and out in the early hours of the morrow. The fish he caught ran small, but he was successful in bagging a brace of half-pounders. Back at the inn at half-past eight in the morning, he separated these two comparative monsters from their smaller brethren, embowered them in a basket full of dewy grass, and set out for the Paleys' cottage.

The morning was as perfect as that of the preceding day. April was proving false even to her fickle reputation. She was all smiles, no tears. His shadow danced before him, long, angular, grotesque, while the warmth of the early sun caressed him. Grass and hedges were wearing their morning jewels.

Yet, strangely enough, Anston's spirits would not rise to the occasion. His was a mercurial temperament, and every burst

of happiness or depression trailed a reaction in its wake. Yesterday he had been extremely happy. A little troubled, too, perhaps, but happy. All the while he whipped the stream he had been haunted by Letty's face. Ripples and eddies in the water became her smiles and dimples. He had "got on" with her so splendidly. Who knew what it might all lead to?

Naturally romantic and impressionable, he had woven a great fabric of dreams and fancies. Spring was in his blood, and in his nostrils the scent of strange smouldering fires lit by the gods. In that spot which we have agreed to call Arcady it is so easy to fall in love. Romance lingers there, the legacy of a vanished age, a whispering ghost for ever surprising man and maid with the oldest secret in the world.

But this morning Anston was paying for yesterday's happiness. This is the way of most young men. Having rejoiced at meeting the Golden Girl, those who are afflicted with rational modesty ask themselves the dreadful question: "But what on earth could she see in me?"

Anston asked himself the question several times that morning. Hitherto he had been moderately contented with his looks; this morning he had recoiled from his shaving mirror, wondering which he more resembled—a racecourse thug of the coarser type or an ill-favoured assassin.

Young men in his circumstances are never short of causes for worry. Wasn't he rather rushing things? he asked himself. It had seemed all right yesterday, when he had light-heartedly promised to bring them trout in time for breakfast, but wasn't it a little *too* Arcadian to make a call, however hurried, at that hour? Considering he was a stranger, mightn't it be considered cheek? On the other hand, he had promised. . . I think the fairies had a good laugh of him that morning. They know just as well as we do what is the matter when a young man begins to worry over what is the "right thing" instead of trusting an instinct hitherto faithful.

It was Letty herself who opened the cottage door in response to his knock. They both started guiltily.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I thought it was the postman!"

His heart turned bitter within him. The postman! What did she want with the postman? Was she expecting a letter from some beastly admirer? Yes, that was it! The more he thought of it, the more he

was sure that this was the only possible explanation.

"I promised to bring you some trout for breakfast," he said, holding out the basket. "Here they are."

She took the basket and, as she did so, there mounted to the roots of her hair a steady flood of colour.

"Won't you—come in?" she faltered.

Yes, she was annoyed. Certainly she was embarrassed and almost certainly annoyed.

"No, I won't come in, thanks," he stammered while he crossed the threshold. "It's much too early. I mean—I mean only for a second."

"I'll let you have the basket back in a moment," she said, retreating. "Thank you so much—for the fish, I mean."

She seemed to be searching wildly for something else to say. Yes, there was certainly something the matter with her. Looking through the open door, she saw a wisp of smoke curling from a half-smoked cigarette which he had thrown away before knocking.

"Won't you smoke?" she asked. "Please do."

While she was absent, he hunted wildly for his cigarette case, and, taking out his fly-book first, laid it down upon the corner of an oak dresser. His cigarette was scarcely alight when she returned.

"Thank you so much," she said, and handed him the basket at arm's length.

"Not at all. Good morning, Miss Paley."

She made no effort to detain him. Of course, in any case, he would not have stopped any longer—at that hour. But *something* was the matter with her. It was not until the door had closed behind him, and he had wretchedly taken a dozen paces, that he remembered that he had not inquired after her aunt. Altogether a most disastrous morning!

In a condition of deep gloom he returned to the inn with no appetite for the breakfast that awaited him. He wondered if the little fox-terrier, who always visited him at meal-times and sat watching him eat with an air of deep concern, had any liking for poached eggs. Not once did it occur to him that he had promoted a little molehill to the full rank of mountain. The sun had gone out. He wondered what on earth induced the birds to sing.

At the door of the inn he was met by the landlord, who wished him "Good morning" with an air of having something more to say. Anston lingered.

"Askin' your pardon, sir, for troublin' 'ee, but could 'ee spare me one o' they little trout in your creel?"

"Certainly. Help yourself. I'm afraid they're very small. I've given the two best away."

"The size don't matter, sir. I want one for that boy o' mine. He be coortin' like."

For one awful moment Anston thought that the man knew his secret. The next, he saw the impossibility of such a thing.

"I see," he remarked, regaining his composure. "And he wants to make the lady a present of fish. I'm afraid they're rather small for a love-offering, but he can have all there are."

"Tesen't that exactly, sir, and one'll do. Why, sir, don't 'ee know 'tes the seventeenth of April—St. Cudolph's Day?"

Anston had never heard of St. Cudolph—indeed, his name is on no calendar. He was one of the many "unofficial" saints who came over to the West Country from Ireland in the early twilight of our history. They have left little behind them but their names, which they have given to parishes, and a few vague traditions. This St. Cudolph was said to be responsible for starting the River Linney by weeping at the hostility of the simple countryfolk, who did not like strangers and greeted them with stones of a convenient size.

"What's that?" Anston asked indifferently.

"Oh, 'tes a custom hereabouts. If a lad give a maid a trout out of the stream on St. Cudolph's Day, she'm bound for to give him a kiss."

Anston made a half turn.

"Is she, by Jove?" he said thoughtfully.

He ate his breakfast, after all, and the little fox-terrier, neglected for once, was able to appreciate the feelings of another little dog who belonged to a certain lady named Hubbard. Anston did some hard thinking while he ate and drank.

Doubtless Letty knew the custom of trout and kisses, which would account for her embarrassment when he arrived. Did she think that he, too, knew it? She might have considered herself insulted if he had asked her for a kiss, and now, doubtless, she was still more insulted because he hadn't. Here was a jolly old mess! What on earth was a fellow to do now?

His first instinct was for flight. How, he asked himself, could he meet her again? He had not even the chance of pleading ignorance of a local custom. One cannot

apologise to a lady for not having claimed a kiss. He cannot assume that the claim would have been met. Had he offered her an insult? Or had she taken him for a fool? The situation, with all its delicacy and ramifications, confounded him. He sat for more than half an hour, blushing, over the remains of his breakfast.

It was later, when he was looking for his fly-book, that he made up his mind as to what he ought to do. The fly-book was missing from his pocket, and it was not to be found in any likely place. It was then that he remembered having taken it from his pocket and laying it on a corner of the oak settle in the Paleys' cottage.

Certainly he must call and ask for it. It would look too idiotic if he did not. And while he was about it. . . Half-formed plans began to shape themselves in his mind, together with scraps of homely adages about "Nothing venture" and "Faint heart." A few minutes later he set out once more for the cottage.

This time it was a maid who opened the door to him.

"I think," he said, "I left a fly-book here this morning."

"Yes, sir. Shall I get it for you?"

"Please. Is Miss Paley in?"

"Both the Miss Paleys is in, sir. Miss Letty's in the drawing-room."

"Will you please let her know that I've called for my book? Say Mr. Anston."

She handed him the fly-book on a salver before acquainting Letty with his presence. Letty came out into the hall as the maid vanished through a door at the back.

"I'm an awful nuisance," he said briefly. "I left my fly-book here."

She seemed nervous, tremulous, even more shy than himself.

"I know you did," she said, with a faint smile. "I was going to send the maid down with it, but I thought you might call, and then you would have missed it. I thought you might remember where you'd left it, and come back for it."

"I've—I've come back for something else. The fly-book is an excuse. When I came here earlier, I knew nothing about St. Cudolph and—and what happens on his day. I've heard since. Miss Paley, put yourself in my place. I—I—oh, it's hopeless trying to explain!"

She was blushing furiously.

"Put yourself in *my* place," she said. "Do you think I should have let you bring those fish if I'd remembered yesterday what day it was to-day?"

He took a step towards her.

"I'm claiming nothing," he said, "only asking very humbly."

"Oh, you mustn't! You mustn't!" she cried, but she stood her ground.

The mischievous fairy who had brought the thing about saw what followed—saw, too, the unexpected arrival of the deaf aunt. The elder Miss Paley was serene and smiling, her expression was innocent as a child's, but one can never be sure what these deaf ladies may have overheard. Once more panic leaped upon Hubert Anston, and once more he brushed it aside. Afterwards he boasted to Letty of how he carried off the situation.

He took the hand of Letty's aunt, bent, and carried it to his lips.

"I sent you a trout this morning, Miss Paley," he said. "A local custom, I believe."





"The realisation of what the old man was playing riveted his attention."

PASCAL FOY

By BERTRAM LEIGH

ILLUSTRATED BY EMILE VERPILLEUX

IT was a beautiful night, so Sir John Ashenden decided to walk from his flat to the hall, instead of taking the customary taxi, and he left home rather earlier than usual in consequence. On such slender threads do the destinies of mortals hang! Had that one night in that one year been wet or unduly cold, the surprisingly human events which happened on the night following, and which made that night and its concert memorable in more ways than one, would never have been set in motion.

He walked meditatively. He was due to conduct through a long programme devoted to Scriabin and Stravinsky, an ordeal liable to make any conductor ruminative beforehand. Suddenly he was aware of an old man standing in the gutter a little ahead of him, playing the violin. As Sir John approached nearer and heard the heavenly air of the slow movement from Beethoven's Kreutzer

Sonata welling through the roar of traffic, the realisation of what the old man was playing riveted his attention and provoked his curiosity concerning the player, for he was interpreting that divine music with a passionate power that in a world-famous violinist would have been remarkable, and in a street musician was unbelievably startling, and terrible was the gulf of pathos which it opened before the famous conductor's sensitive imagination. He went up to him and spoke.

"It is not often that one hears Beethoven played in the streets, and still less often that one hears him played as you have just been playing him. One might think you were some great violinist, disguised and playing in the streets for a bet. But, if you were, I should recognise you, and I don't."

"No, sir, you don't."

His "sir" was not obsequious; it was

the politeness as of one member of a club to a fellow-member who yet was a stranger.

"I certainly don't," said Sir John. "But I intend to know you."

The old man looked at him, and the pathos of that look was desolating. He said something unintelligibly beneath his breath—perhaps it was also in a language unknown to his listener. He was, it could be perceived, a foreigner, but his English was singularly good. Ashenden learnt afterwards that his father had been French and his mother Hungarian.

"Yes," Sir John continued, "for I am convinced I should know your name if you were to tell it to me. A musician such as you are wouldn't always have hidden his light under a bushel, and a reputation isn't forgotten—as it can be made—in a night. Come, who are you?"

"I was long before your time, Sir John."

"So, at all events, you know my name. Won't you reciprocate?"

The old man smiled.

"Of course I know you," he said, with a foreign gesture. "Is not Sir John Ashenden one of the most famous of modern conductors? Has not his face stared at me from countless posters these many years? But I am of the old school—of the old school, Sir John. I am forgotten. I have been forgotten these thirty years. Thirty years! *Ma foi*, how I have dropped out!"

Ashenden saw the tears come into his eyes. He took him by the arm.

"I must get on," said the conductor hastily. "Come along with me, and we will have a talk together on the way."

The old violinist shuffled on beside the conductor, his long, threadbare overcoat tightly buttoned across his chest, his violin and bow held slackly at his side. He was tall and very thin, and his long white hair escaped from under a shabby, nondescript, black felt hat.

"Now," Sir John continued, still holding him by the arm, "tell me who you are. If it must be a secret, it will be a secret safe with me. I promise you that."

"A secret—let it be kept a secret," the old man muttered. "It is not good for the world to know how an artist can fail his art—it reflects on the art, *hein*?"

"To the world, not to a fellow-artist. Tell me, between here and the next lamp." He pressed his arm encouragingly.

It was scarcely even a whisper, but Sir John heard it.

"Pascal Foy! Pascal Foy!"

Ashenden could hardly believe it; he would not have believed it had he not already heard his playing, but, that having been so, the truth of the avowal was beyond all doubt. He was inexpressibly shocked. For so great an artist—the rival, in their day, of Joachim and Sarasate—to have come down to playing in the streets for coppers!

Ashenden could not speak. He kept tight hold of the old man's arm, and in a little while they had reached the conductor's destination. There was then no time to hear more. Ashenden took him, despite his protests, into the artists' room. The orchestra, except for one or two hurrying stragglers, were already on the platform, tuning up. He bade the old man wait there for him until the interval.

"No, no, no! I cannot wait—here!" His reluctance was obviously but too genuine.

"Why not?" Ashenden asked, and realised, as he spoke, what a foolish question that had been.

"To listen to the full orchestra again after so long—*pars magna fui*—no, no, no! I could not bear it! Let me go!"

"That is utterly unthinkable, Monsieur Foy," was the emphatic reply.

"I will return," he said simply, looking the other in the eyes as he spoke.

With that Ashenden had to be content. Foy promised to meet him at the door when the concert was over, and on that understanding he was let go. Sir John Ashenden mounted the platform, a moment later, with that pathetic figure still before his eyes, a desolating inspiration to draw the most human response from the music he was to conduct.

He found the old man afterwards, duly waiting for him, and they walked together to Ashenden's flat. Bit by bit the conductor learned the violinist's story—the story not so much of decadence as of martyrdom. In the full flush of his fame he had fallen in love with a headstrong Austrian aristocrat still in her teens, and had married her, only to find that she had become his wife out of a wilful desire to wound her uncle and guardian and show independence. It was not long before she decided, equally wilfully, to become reconciled to her family. She deserted her husband, taking with her their newly-born child, and secluded herself in one of her uncle's castles in the wilds of Transylvania. Her family refused to acknowledge the violinist's existence; he was denied access to his wife and authority over

his child. The uncle was a high personage about the Austrian Court, a favourite of the Emperor Franz Josef, and those were the days when the favourites of autocrats could hammer legality to their own devices as easily as a smith a bar of molten iron.

Pascal Foy had not taken his troubles philosophically. In his desperate fight to obtain possession at least of his son, he neglected his professional engagements, and gradually dropped behind in the race; newcomers overtook him and kept their footing ahead. And then he lost heart because he had lost spirit. His ambition died, his old aspiration became the mockery of its own lingering shadow. Slowly, step by step, he drifted downward; disillusion worked its corruption; despair and the false Lethe of drink consummated the tragedy. His wife, he had learned, was dead. Of his son he knew nothing. The all-powerful family had obliterated the connecting links between father and child.

Ashenden was moved by his story, and took him home with him to his bachelor quarters and kept him for the night. His gratitude was pitiful to behold. It stabbed with its infinite pathos. In the morning the conductor made him the proposition he had decided upon overnight; sleeping on it had only the more confirmed his intention. He offered him a position among the first violins in his band. Incidentally he also offered him the use of an old dress-suit, a starched shirt, and the requisite tie and collar. Pascal Foy accepted them all, pressing his benefactor's hand in both of his, the tears not far from his eyes.

"The brotherhood of art!" he murmured. "It is only in great artists that pity is without prejudice. God bless you!"

"There is a rehearsal this morning," Ashenden said. "I'll take you round with me. It is for the concert to-night. The programme is a classical one, so you won't be at sea in a storm of modernism. We are doing the Coriolan Overture, the Jupiter Symphony, the Beethoven Violin Concerto—young Frezenius is playing it—and Bach's Suite in G for orchestra."

"Mozart, Beethoven, Bach!" Pascal Foy spoke with closed eyes and with the reverential fervour of the true initiate. "To hear them once more, and played as they should be played . . . once more!"

Sir John dared not look at him, but hastened into his study to busy himself with some overdue correspondence. Presently he heard the old man practising in

the adjoining room. At first he played scales, but after a while he drifted into a Mozartian aria. What tone! What delicacy of phrasing! He could scarcely concentrate on his letters for the sheer delight of over-hearing.

The rehearsal went off splendidly. Frezenius, though complaining of not feeling well, was note perfect and at his best, and Ashenden had no fears for the performance of the evening. He had introduced Foy to his colleagues, at his own request, under an assumed name. He fitted into his place easily and unobtrusively, but Sir John noticed, with a quiet smile to himself, the amazement of his neighbours at the mastery he showed of the fiddle. They were obviously puzzled as to how exactly to place him. None, of course, recognised the old man, though his real name would have been known to every one of them.

When evening came, Foy refused to go with Sir John Ashenden to the hall in the taxi that had been engaged, but insisted upon walking there by himself, from a strange and mistaken feeling, Sir John assumed, of delicacy on his behalf at being seen to arrive in his company. He had evolved an exaggerated idea of the respect which, as the newest addition to the orchestra, he considered he owed that orchestra's chief, who rallied him upon the point as humorously as he could, though, indeed, it secretly hurt him to have the old genius—a greater musician by far, he knew, than himself—as an underling.

Ashenden found Frezenius in the artists' room, looking pale and tired. He still complained of not feeling well, and arranged a sign with the conductor, in case he wished to leave the platform, during a *tutti* passage, that would enable him to take a dose of a medicine he carried with him for his attacks of *malaise*—he was subject to them—and return in time to take up his solo part at the requisite place. He indicated one or two passages in the score of the concerto suitable for such a procedure, if he should feel it necessary.

The concert began. Beethoven's Coriolan Overture and the Mozart Symphony were alike played superbly, and there was every indication of an entirely successful programme. The violin concerto opened with perfect precision and balance, and Sir John settled himself to real personal enjoyment as Frezenius, after the preliminary *tutti*, broke into the music with exquisite tone and masterly phrasing.

The first intermission of the solo instrument passed without event, but at the beginning of the second Frezenius made him the prearranged sign, and left the platform. He continued conducting without uneasiness, for he was sure that the soloist would be back in time to take up his note again at the right bar. But as the seconds ran on and bar merged inevitably into bar without his reappearance, the conductor began to grow fidgety. There was no time to lose; the solo part would fall due when he should turn over the next leaf but one of the score in front of him. With a strange feeling of almost physical apprehension, he turned over the first leaf. There was only a moment more to spare, and still Frezenius did not come. And then he saw an attendant

the concerto would have to be brought abruptly to an end. He looked hurriedly along the tiers of playing musicians, and the expression on his face somehow communicated what had happened. He saw their eyes fasten with one accord upon him as they waited for the tap of his baton on the conductor's desk to signal the inevitable cessation.

There remained only a few bars to be played before the solo instrument would have to come in. Ashenden had already fixed upon the moment at which to tap the desk. He looked round the orchestra once again. In doing so he caught the eye of Pascal Foy. It was as if an hypnotic suggestion were conveyed by that intense gaze, and the conductor's brain bent before the old



"It may be doubted whether Foy had ever achieved such a personal triumph."

on the ante-room stairs making gestures to him, by which he knew that Frezenius was too ill to return to the platform, and that

violinist's. Never will Sir John Ashenden forget the pleading in Foy's eyes as he looked at him breathlessly, straining to

make him understand and, more than understand, consent. A rush of emotion overwhelmed the usually autocratic conductor, and on the top of its wave he nodded. The flash that came into Pascal Foy's eyes! The proud lift of his head! Even if the experiment were a failure, that flash, that gesture

of Pascal Foy that night. Frezenius had begun superbly, but Foy's playing was more than superb—it was sublime. The experiences of a long, tragic life were there to quicken the perfected technique with a human intensity unattainable by the younger artist. Such playing, Sir John knew well, he had never heard before; it was probably impossible that he would ever hear its like again.

When the first movement was finished, the applause was extraordinary. Ashenden motioned Foy forward from his back place. For the rest of the concerto he faced



"He was recalled to bow his acknowledgments a dozen times or more."

would be to Sir John for ever among the memorable things of life.

He did not tap the desk with his baton; the concerto went on, and the right beat was timely matched by the right note from the solo instrument. It was a moment dramatically complete in itself. Ashenden could feel behind him the excitement of the vast audience; he could see before him the astonishment of the whole orchestra.

It is not possible to describe the playing

his audience from the soloist's proper position.

The Larghetto went to everybody's heart. The emotion of that music is among the sacred things of inspiration, and Foy's playing added to it a sacredness of its own. And in the Rondo which follows the Larghetto the lightness of touch and the purity of tone, with that master hand recapturing its old and almost miraculous felicity, were things not heard twice in a century. The

happy rhythms, suggestive of dances and merrymaking, flickered in melody through the hall, captivating and heartening every hearer until at last, with those two abrupt chords, the wonderful music came to a close.

It would be impossible to describe, so that anyone could truly see it, the scene which followed. It may be doubted whether Foy, at any time in his career, even when at the height of his fame, had ever achieved such a personal triumph or received so tremendous an ovation. He was recalled to bow his acknowledgments a dozen times or more. But nothing would persuade him to play again. He was too tired, he said to the smiling Sir John, and, indeed, he looked it. As Ashenden watched him bowing to the clamouring audience, it flashed into his mind that Foy looked like some overwrought and dream-bewildered prophet, with his tall, gaunt aspect, his long, white hair and his transfigured face. Yet even then he still seemed a creature of infinite pathos. It was as though he had been crushed by the inspiration within him, and was apologetic to Time for lingering so, between heaven and earth, broken with the humility born of such disillusion as had been his—a humility only intensified by the proven vanity of the triumphs of this world. With all that, Sir John envied him.

The concerto was followed by the interval. In the artists' room Frezenius, who had recovered from his acute spasm of indisposition, congratulated his deputy with a boyish sincerity and enthusiasm that seemed to please the old man as much as the triumph itself. Sir John Ashenden judged it the moment for divulging Pascal Foy's identity. The interest which this evoked, and the obvious remembrance of his name among the newer generation of musicians, moved the old violinist deeply. Of course he could be considered no longer as a mere member of the orchestra, and he was left conversing with Frezenius when Ashenden returned to the platform to conduct the second half of the programme.

The concert over, Sir John went down into the artists' room, rubbing his hands in sheer pleasure at Pascal Foy's dramatic return to fame—already he had had the Press duly and accurately informed of the circumstances—and planning to carry him off with him to his flat and celebrate the unique occasion with one or two chosen friends.

He was humming a gay air as he entered, but the scene upon which he came froze it

on his lips. The old man was lying on the floor, supported in the arms of Frezenius and surrounded by a small group of anxious instrumentalists.

"He has had either a faint or a seizure," said one of them.

Sir John went forward and knelt beside the unconscious figure. "How did it happen?" he asked of Frezenius.

"We were talking quite quietly together until only a few moments ago, when suddenly he turned very pale and said he did not feel well. Before I could do anything he was practically unconscious. I think it is a faint. The excitement has probably been too much for him."

"Poor old chap!" said someone.

"He is coming round," whispered Frezenius, bathing the old man's forehead with the handkerchief he had dipped into a glass of water which an attendant had brought in.

Pascal Foy opened his eyes. They fastened upon the face of the young violinist who was leaning over him.

"Lotte!" he murmured. "Lotte, my wife! Speak to me, Lotte!"

"He is wandering," Ashenden said to Frezenius. "He thinks you are his wife."

"You have come back to me, Lotte?" the old man went on, asking a heartbreaking question. "You have come back to me at last?"

Frezenius looked at Sir John quickly, then answered Pascal Foy in the only way that he could be answered.

"Yes, I have come back to you."

"Lotte!"

A happy smile touched his lips. He closed his eyes for a while, and then Ashenden heard that other question which he had known only too well would come.

"Where is Jean? Where is my son? Is he not with you, Lotte?"

Frezenius looked again at the conductor, this time helplessly. Then Foy opened his eyes, and once more they fastened upon the face of the young violinist.

"Ah, Jean!" he cried. "Jean, my son!"

Frezenius continued bathing the old man's forehead. Ashenden saw him hesitate, then he bent down and touched the worn brow with his lips.

"I am here, father."

At the words the face of Pascal Foy lit up with a wonderful and most moving happiness.

"Jean, Jean! Oh, my son! Not since you were a tiny babe! She took you from me! . . . Jean! . . . My son!"

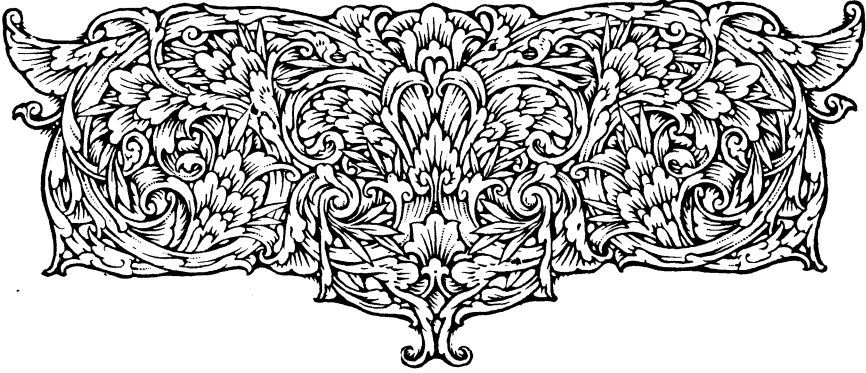
His voice was gradually growing weaker, and he succumbed to brief spells of complete unconsciousness. It was some little time before he spoke again. Then, gazing up at Frezenius, he murmured :

"You are very like your mother, Jean. You have her eyes."

He tried to cough, could not, and in the effort passed quietly away.

Reverently they made what arrangements were necessary, and Sir John Ashenden left the hall sadly, tiredly, and feeling old. Frezenius accompanied him as far as Oxford Circus. There they parted.

"It was a strange coincidence," said Frezenius, as the two shook hands. "My own name is Jean, and my mother's was Lotte. Good night!"



THE OLD HOUSE.

I COME back to the old house years after;
 Gone are the faces I knew, and the voices and laughter,
 But the trees are there, and the flowers
 That I knew in long summer hours
 Ere silence had settled on garden and roof-tree and rafter.

Silence is balm to the soul, but not here, not here,
 Where ghostly footfalls wander, year upon year,
 Where old dreams only die
 To awake where the poplars sigh,
 To awake where the trembling willows shed tear upon tear.

I will not weep for a shadow, or sigh for a dream,
 Future and past are one in the flowing stream
 Of change and decay and death and birth,
 Of wilting moon and cooling earth,
 And the prophet's useless frenzy and the poet's tarnished theme.

I come back to the old house and pause and wonder,
 Finding the days I counted Eternity snowed deep under;
 Old plans, hopes once aglow
 Are now colder than snow,
 But the grey house greets, as of old, sun, rain and thunder.

R. B. INCE.

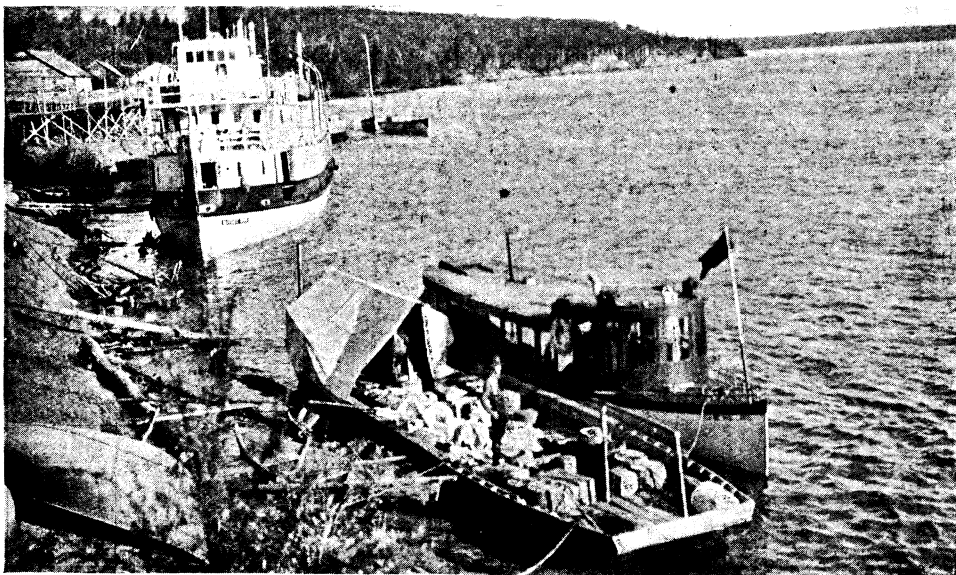
INTO THE ARCTIC FOR OIL

A GREAT ADVENTURE GROUND

By DAVID LOUGHNAN

ONE thousand seven hundred and sixty miles of wild plains and barrens separate the new oil-fields of the Canadian North-West Territories from the nearest railroad point if the trip is under-

fortune out beyond the frontiers of civilisation. The silent places, the intervening vastness, the dangers, the well-nigh insurmountable barriers that must be conquered mile after mile in the advance against the

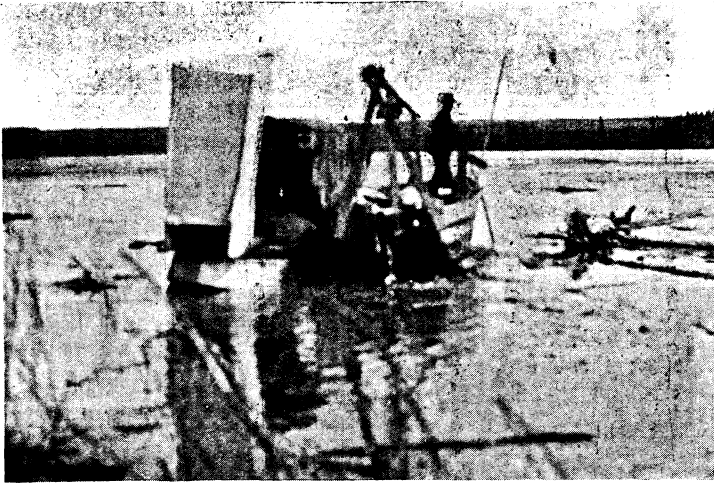


THE SLAVE RIVER AT FORT SMITH, SHOWING S.S. "MACKENZIE RIVER" IN DISTANCE AND PRIVATE OUTFIT IN FOREGROUND.

taken by present water routes of travel. This journey, *via* the Peace River, Great Slave Lake, and the mighty Mackenzie River, which empties into the ice-bound shores of the Arctic Ocean, forms, from Peace River Crossing to Fort Norman, almost a half-circle joined at either end by the course of the Mackenzie and Peace Rivers running almost due north and south. Yet the age-old lure of adventure, the call of the wild, the challenge of the North, still hold their ancient spell and beckon the pathfinders to dare their all in the new quest for

stern forces of Nature, await the coming of those who, like "The Company of Gentlemen Adventurers Trading into Hudson's Bay" in the long ago of 1670, will toss the dice with Fate, and win or lose on a single throw. Already the vanguard of Northern pioneers have penetrated and blazed the trail to the new Eldorado. Thousands will follow.

Peace River Crossing, situated at the end of steel on the Edmonton, Dunvegan, and British Columbia Railway, is one of the gateways to the empire of newly discovered and potential wealth. It is also an embarkation



A SMALL OUTFIT GOING IN FROM PEACE RIVER CROSSING TO FITZGERALD.

point from which the long water journey commences. Doubtless the near future will see air routes established from Peace River Crossing right into the heart of the Mackenzie basin, where oil is already flowing. Several air trips have already been attempted, but without success, and until aircraft are fitted with pontoons for water-landing, the air route is almost impossible over such rough country. This year, at any rate, the Peace River itself forms the main and almost only highway into the North. An alternate route is from Clear Water River, about twenty miles below Fort McMurray, reached by the

Alberta Great Waterways Railroad, from which point the Hudson's Bay Company boat runs up the Athabasca River and along the Slave River to the rapids at Fitzgerald.

Many tales of romantic interest centre around the rivers of the north-west country. Somewhere in the big bend of the Peace River, bisected by a line drawn from Fort St. John to the mouth of the Battle River, is an old river-bed where the Peace once

flowed, and to locate this ancient waterway prospectors recently outfitted in Edmonton. Some have already gone in. Several men have come from the gold-fields of Alaska, the report of the mystic Eldorado north of the Peace having reached their ears. They also are *en route* to try their luck in the country north of the Clear Hills. This minor stampede is the direct result of a story circulated amongst the old-timers of the north country, the truth of which will doubtless be proved during the coming season. Here is the tale. Some years ago an Indian, coming into Fort St. John from the country to the north-east of the post,



A SCOW GOING THROUGH THE VERMILION CHUTES CARRYING A HULL WHEEL FOR WELL AT WINDY POINT.

picked up a fair-sized gold nugget which he discovered in a stream. Following this, an old trapper, a white man, who made Fort St. John his rendezvous, came in to the Fort with a quantity of coarse gold which he had washed from some stream in a similar direction to that from which the Indian hailed. Thereafter the old fellow gave up trapping, and lived on the fat of the land in care-free idleness at the post. Whenever his supplies of necessities ran low, he hitched his dogs to a sleigh and disappeared, but in a few days was back again with a fresh supply of gold. This continued for a number of years; but Fate overtook the old man, and one day his

the north of Clear Hills in large quantities. Many men have prospected the country previously in the endeavour to locate the old man's secret, which died with him, but so far without success.

Miners possessing technical knowledge claim that there is undoubtedly gold in paying quantities along the Peace; colours can be obtained in many places, but not in sufficient quantity to provide pay dirt. It is stated by an old Hudson's Bay Company man from the region of the upper Peace that during the rush to the Klondyke two men washing on the river found a bar from which they took a large quantity of gold. They went no further north, but returned



TRANSPORTATION FROM FORT MACMURRAY TO LAC LA BICHE, VIA ALBERTA GREAT WATERWAYS RAILROAD—100 MILES IN TWO DAYS.

body was found on the trail frozen stiff. He still has a large credit account in the books of the Hudson's Bay Company.

It is said by the northmen that the only time when gold was available was when there was a heavy fall of snow, with which the old fellow apparently washed his mineral when he had melted the white blanket into water. From an analysis of the circumstances generally, it is thought that the place from which the gold was taken was some old river bed where the Peace once flowed, but whether the story is correct or not remains to be proved. Prospectors, however, are putting up good money to test the truth of the theory that the precious metal does exist somewhere to

to Winnipeg with the intention of exploiting their find. When they finally returned to the Peace country, they were unable to locate the bar from which the gold had been obtained, and it is thought that a slide from a cut bank on the other side of the river lodged in the stream and, deflecting the current, caused the bar on which they had been working to be carried out by the flood water. But to return to the oil-fields trail.

At Peace River Crossing boats or scows may be built or purchased to carry vital supplies of food and material, without which the Royal Canadian Mounted Police will not allow anyone to set forth. With ordinary luck Vermilion Chutes are reached in four



LOOKING ACROSS SLAVE RIVER AT FITZGERALD: TEAM OF HUSKY DOGS IN FOREGROUND.

or five days' travel. A scow fitted with an engine will make the trip in that time. This point marks the first "portage." Boats, engines, and paraphernalia must be hauled on wagons, while a scow, if used, may be allowed to drift over the Chutes. Continuing along the Peace River, another four or five days' travel is required before Fitzgerald—formerly known as Smith's Landing—is reached. Between Fitzgerald and Fort Smith the river presents the only obstacle to steamboat navigation on the long stretch to the Arctic Ocean. The Slave River, upon which both places are situated,

takes a big drop between these two settlements, necessitating a sixteen-mile portage, significantly known as "the mosquito portage." Motors are on hire at Fitzgerald to take passengers over the ground, and teams may be engaged to haul freight. The Slave Rapids are unnavigable, therefore boats must either be hauled or taken overland in sections. Several parties this year have had scows built at Fort Smith, from which point navigation is open during the short season clear to the Arctic.

Some idea of the difficulties which have to be encountered on the adventurous journey



A CANADIAN GOVERNMENT SURVEY PARTY WEARING SNOW GLASSES AND CARRYING WOOD ALCOHOL FOR HEATING PURPOSES.

may be gained from the fact that a passage has to be "bucked" through the ice on Great Slave Lake in the early part of July. This lake lies within the forested region, and there are numerous fur-trading stations along its 300-mile shore. Notwithstanding the short summer season, vegetation is rapid and ordinary farm crops can be grown. Potatoes planted on the first of June are ready for use during the last week in July. The rigours of the Mackenzie district are not over-severe, and its summers are really delightful.

Although the Mackenzie is a turbulent river at times, being subject to frequent and sudden squalls, the boat trips from Fort Smith to Norman can be made in about

indications denote the regions along the Mackenzie River to be rich in petroleum, and the successful operations at Fort Norman will encourage great development work during the next few years.

While the population of the Northland is composed mainly of half-breeds, the surveying and pioneering of recent years has provided a large corps of hardy men capable of undertaking exploration work. Guides, canoe and river men, axemen, trail makers, freighters, may be engaged at the outfitting point, as also native "mushers" and "packers." The larger outfits "going in" last summer took the precaution of securing carpenters from as far south as Vancouver. With an exceptionally short summer



CAMPING IN THE SNOW.

fourteen days. At this point the river narrows, and the valley in which the Imperial Oil Company's well is located is some seventy-five miles wide and about three hundred miles long. Although the area of the new oil-fields is estimated to cover over one hundred and fifty thousand square miles, it is believed that in the Norman Valley the main supply will eventually be found. When oil was struck at "the" well, it shot up nearly one hundred feet and blew the cap off ten times during the first six hours. Although the bore was made with only an ordinary well-drilling outfit, a star rig without derrick being used for the ten-inch hole, the yield is of such a high grade that experts declare the main body is as yet undiscovered. Geological and surface

season that allows only about six weeks' actual work in the oil-fields, provision has to be made for the return trip. In this connection perhaps the feature of secondary interest to the silent, moccasined boatmen are the "huskies"—the near-wolf breed of dogs that make winter travel possible across the snow-covered spaces "north of 60." Inured through generations to extreme cold and endowed with the speed, strength, and endurance required for "mushing," these dogs are the burden-bearers of the North. Covered with short bristly hair and a thick undercoat of fur, these sagacious animals have long been invaluable to prospectors, miners, mounted police, trappers, and all whose calling or inclination carries them beyond the habitations of man into the



THE IMPERIAL OIL COMPANY'S WELL NEAR FORT NORMAN

Police will prevent the physically unfit, the insufficiently outfitted, the shiftless camp-follower, from ever setting out. Major Leslie Jennings, superintendent of the Force, whose headquarters are at Edmonton, virtually rules the North-West Territories, and is the final authority as to who is qualified, physically and materially, to make the trip. Restrictions are

unknown. In teams of five, seven or nine, they haul hundreds of pounds of food and equipment on the sleighs used for this purpose. And they do it on a diet of frozen fish and the scraps from the supper and breakfast of each night's camp. Without them the Northern exploration of the last three centuries would have been impossible.

The discovery of oil in the Mackenzie basin has already resulted in the excitement which precedes a "rush," but no repetition of the Klondyke stampede will occur. The Royal Canadian Mounted

very rigid. To those approved, a permit is given carrying the name of the holder, name of next-of-kin, age, nationality, residence, and purpose of the trip. Clearance papers must be obtained from the Mounted Police at Edmonton, and the prospective fortune-seeker must prove that he has sufficient food to last for three months, that he has arranged for a year's supply, that he is thoroughly equipped for the journey, that he has guides for unknown parts. In addition, he must report to each Mounted Police post on the way, who certify him



THE SHORE LINE ON THE MACKENZIE RIVER NEAR FORT NORMAN, SHOWING MOSQUITO-PROOF BEDS.

to the next detachment. Major Jennings will not allow more people to go "in" than can be supplied by the companies having posts at which food and other necessities may be obtained, or than can be accommodated by the transportation companies. In addition to preliminary inspection, the Mounted Police will keep in touch with every party that goes up the Mackenzie. Failing twelve months' provision, they will have to leave the oil-fields on the last south-bound boat before the freeze-up. This boat leaves about August 20, scarcely six weeks after navigation opens about July 1. Except under special circumstances, permits will not be issued to women. These precautionary rules are necessary, both for the sake of saving lives and to prevent an undue burden from resting upon the regular dwellers of the North, whose supplies are more or less limited and uncertain.

Although only twenty-four persons actually entered the oil-fields during last winter, owing largely to the difficulties of

transportation—a problem affecting the shipment of the oil after its discovery as well as the prospectors themselves—it is merely a question of time before the present frontiers are pushed backward and the real invasion of adventurous and indomitable pioneers begins. And the limitless regions that once were known only to the trapper, the "red coat," the Indian, the lonely prospector, may soon become populated and settled by that throng of dauntless spirits in whose veins runs the red blood of their forefathers—men from every clime and speaking every tongue, of all callings and from every strata of so-called society. Fortunes will be won and lost, but the barriers of space, of cold or hardship, will fail utterly to halt the quest for fortune that finds its impetus in the one magic word "oil."

And who can predict what awaits those who lead the line into the farthest reaches of this Northern empire, beyond, yet into, the heart of romance's last great adventure ground?



"GOOD MORNING, VALENTINE!"

By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY E. G. OAKDALE

"DO you know what to-morrow is, Betty?" Miss Elizabeth Stone's niece asked her, when they were going to bed.

"The fourteenth of February," Miss Elizabeth said, "to me. To *you* I dare say it's Valentine's Day."

"How you do like to make yourself out an old thing!" Marie protested.

"Only a sensible one," Miss Elizabeth assured her. "The plain fact is that I am thirty-two. Thirteen years older than you—almost old enough to be called aunt!"

("I'll be a sort of mother to you," Miss Elizabeth had offered, when Marie Stone was left alone and unprovided for, "but I'm hanged if I'll be 'Aunt.'")

"Well, I shan't," Marie said.

"Anyhow," Miss Elizabeth stated, "old enough and ugly enough——"

"Fishing for compliments!"

"To be assured that no one will greet *me* 'Good morning, Valentine.'"

"Because you won't be their valentine," Marie contended. "You could be if you liked. There was something in the way you said 'Good morning, Valentine!' that made it sound like—oh, I don't know! What did it stand for to you?"

"The inscription on a tombstone, my dear," Miss Elizabeth told her. "I don't want to be reminded of it. Of all the words in a wordy world, they are the last that I wish to hear or see to-morrow morning. So don't you dare!"

Yet she heard them the next morning, just after the maid had brought her morning tea, and she sat up in bed in her pink dressing-jacket and saw herself in the long looking-glass. She sipped the tea, and stared long and hard at her own reflection.

"Good morning, Valentine!" she taunted

herself fiercely, spilt some tea on the new bed-spread, uttered a naughty word, and took up *The Daily Record*, seeking refuge from herself—and from "the inscription."

She opened the paper in the middle, and the inscription stared at her in leaded type:

Good morning, Valentine!

It was the title of an article deploring the passing of a tender old custom.

Miss Elizabeth gave a savage little cry and crumpled the paper angrily in her dainty hands. She was rather given to little bursts of anger, though the bursts were usually evanescent and harmless. "A sweet woman with a temper," someone had called her (to her pretty face) in time before—someone who had been the last to greet her as his Valentine, the only man who had ever had the right so to greet her.

That was ten years ago now; but she had not altered much in either respect, though perhaps both sweetness and temper were a trifle chastened, like her looks. She was still pretty, but the prettiness was a wee bit "tired." The look of the girl who is finding things in life was replaced by the look of the woman who has lost something. Her friends thought that the loss was just a valentine.

Anyhow, the newspaper heading set her thinking of one, sitting up in bed, with her knees raised and an elbow on a knee, and her chin upon her hand. Really a very pretty lady, although the ten added years were in discontented evidence.

She seemed to picture the old valentine lying before her, a page of very neatly-written verses ("What a nice hand Norman wrote!") with a very ill-drawn Cupid upon the top of them. ("Norman never could draw. I thought at first that the wing was a shawl!")

The verses that she seemed to see again were these :—

TO BETTY BEFORE WE BEGIN.

Dear Betty, soon to be my bride,
Dear love of mine! Mine! Mine!
The last year that I call outside:
"Good morning, Valentine!"

God keep you near, for many a year,
The sun on me to shine,
And me each day as glad to say—
"Good morning, Valentine!"

When comes the worst, may who goes first
Wait just across the line
"Twixt Now and Then, to say again:
"Good morning, Valentine!"

"Tosh in itself," Miss Elizabeth muttered, when she had stumbled through the verses in her mind, going back occasionally to get a word right—warned by a failure to rhyme. "And, in its context, tosh of toshes! To vow for ever in the morning, and to take the ring back in the afternoon, just because the girl says a few things in a temper! And I always warned him that I should 'fly out' about once a week through the 'many a year.' Of course I was wrong; but I should often have been wrong through 'the many years.' I always told him so. I expect that's what I shall say if I meet him across the line. Who knows? . . . 'I told you so!' That's my probable angelic greeting! . . . Nice angel! What a little *demon* I was that morning!"

Her memory went back to "the context."

She stood panting with her hand on "the silver table"—so-called from its ornaments—in her mother's drawing-room. The verses, rent in two, lay at her feet. Norman Temple stood at the doorway, glaring at her. He, too, had a temper, hard to rouse (he was usually distinctly "easy." She gave him that credit in her memory), but out of hand when roused.

"When you find out that your suspicions—they show a nasty mind!—are utterly and entirely wrong, if you have the fairness and pluck to write and say so, I'll try to forgive you; but unless you do, I'll never come back, Betty!"

"Never dare!" she cried. "I know your horrid temper now. Go!"

He went, bowed, and spoke bitterly as he closed the door.

"Good morning, Valentine!"

"Cad!" Betty called. But she was always afraid that he did not hear her.

She found out that her suspicions were utterly and entirely wrong; would have owned this (and lectured Norman for not

making a sensible defence, "instead of flying into a beastly temper, and frightening a poor little girl into saying what you ought to have *known* she didn't mean!") if he had come to see her; but he did not come. He went off overseas, to his brother in Ceylon, without even saying good-bye to her. A year later she heard that he had married.

She shrugged her shoulders and told herself that she was "well out of it." . . . Shrugged her shoulders still after ten years. . . .

"So much for the ever and ever stunt!" she said scornfully. "He always vowed that he wouldn't marry anyone else if we—kicked up. And did it first chance; proved himself a liar! . . . However, I always said I *should*. So I'm a liar, too! . . . Well, I hope she combed his hair for him while she was alive! (She had heard that Mrs. Temple died six years ago.) It's not because I worry about Master Norman that I don't marry, but because I don't happen to want to marry anyone in particular. I wish I did. A woman is entitled to have one man to bully. Wouldn't I just! Well, now for the toshy old paper and the toshy old tea!"

She took up the cup; found the tea cold; spilt some more on the bed-spread; said another naughty word. "I don't know what's the matter with me this morning. I seem to be distinctly profane! It's this rotten paper raking up the silly old past against me! 'Good Morning, Valentine!' May I never hear it again! . . . Well, I shan't! . . ."

The telephone bell rang. She picked up the receiver.

"Miss Stone speaking," she announced (according to the printed instructions).

"Good morning, Valentine!" a man's voice said. She almost dropped the receiver. The voice was rather like Norman's, and the laugh which followed was *very* like his.

"Who is it?" she gasped.

"Your Valentine," he claimed.

"In-deed! I suppose I have some voice in the matter? Who is it?"

It wasn't *quite* Norman's voice. . . . But voices alter. . . .

"It's Harry," the voice answered.

"Ur-r-r!" she muttered aside from the telephone. "I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure!"

She turned over the Henrys of her acquaintance; wondered what one or two H's stood for.

“Well, what about it, ‘Harry’?” she fenced.

“I’d come and strum under your window,” Harry announced, “but for the dragon aunt!”

“Oh-h-h! It may interest you to know that it isn’t Marie speaking, but the dragon aunt!”

“Er—er—I meant—er—”

Miss Elizabeth grinned wickedly, shook her fist at the telephone.

“If you’re that young fool Harry Blake—”

“Eh?” the voice cried in alarm. “What? Who? Blake, did you say? Never heard of him!” Neither had Miss Elizabeth, but she knew very well now who was speaking, and that he was madly jealous of Marie’s other suitors. She was a lady who liked to get her own back.

“You’d better ask Marie about him,” she advised. “I’ll put you back to the hall. Mind you make it plain to the maid that you wish to valentine Marie, not the dragon! The next time you call, I’ll box your ears—Harry Potter!”

“Serve me right!” he owned. “Dragon was only a figure of speech, though, Miss Elizabeth. I’ll swear it. Wet my finger, and cross my throat, and—”

“Stop, stop, you donkey! . . . Is that you, Polly? This gentleman wants Miss Marie, not me. Transfer him, please.”

She hung up the receiver.

“Young donkeys,” she sighed. “And once I was one. I suppose I still am, for I was quite fluttered when I thought it might be that owl! . . . ‘Good morning, Valentine!’ I wonder if he says it to his wife! But I heard that she was dead. That was why I thought perhaps . . . Bah! I dare say he’s got another by now. What does it matter to me? I don’t care really. I’m just playing a sentimental stunt with myself. I’ve practically forgotten all about Norman for—say, nine years and eleven months. I’ll admit that I gritted for a few weeks. It was absurd, of course, to think that he was speaking. If he’d really cared, he’d have made some excuse to come and see me before he went away. I suppose any old excuse would have done. I was a young fool then. . . . I’d have been married to him for about nine years and a half. . . . I might have been married to some other fool for—anything from nine years to nine days, if I hadn’t been a pig-headed idiot. . . . I might now. . . .” She shook her fist at the Miss Elizabeth in the looking-glass. “No,

you don’t!” she said. “You may do all the other fool things, Bet Stone, but marry a man you don’t want to, you shan’t. It would be a dirty trick upon the man! And upon yourself because. . . . Oh, you fool! Get on with your toshy paper!”

She buried herself in the middle pages of *The Daily Record*.

“Wreck of *The Hope of the Clan*,” she read. “Only a few of the women and children passengers saved. All the men lost. . . .” “Dreadful—dreadful! I shan’t read any more about it.” “Lloyd George’s speech. . . .”

Tr-r-r-r! The telephone bell rang again. She picked up the receiver rather impatiently.

“Miss Stone speaking—*Elizabeth Stone*.”

“Good morning, Valentine!”

It was a woman’s voice this time.

“What the—I suppose it’s you, Kate?” She meant Kate Harris, Temple’s second cousin, and many years her friend, using the word as Society ladies like Miss Elizabeth use it. There was no great love lost between them, but they had been intimate all their lives; and Kate was the only person to whom Elizabeth had ever told the rights of “the Temple affair.” “I’m going by the rot you talk!”

“I forgot that the greeting touched a sore spot. As a matter of fact, I don’t know that I really used it from forgetfulness. From unconscious memory, I expect—association, don’t they call it? I *was* thinking of an old valentine of yours. . . . Look here, Betty. You were coming in to play auction this afternoon, weren’t you?”

“What passes for auction with *you*!”

“Ah! You’re wild in your calls, Bet. Not only at bridge. That’s just why I thought I’d better warn you that someone’s likely to come whom you mayn’t wish to meet—or may. I don’t know that you’d mind nowadays, of course; only thinking of what you said to me donkey’s years ago.”

“Who is it?”

Miss Elizabeth wondered whether the ‘phone was bumping, or only her heart.

“The ex-valentine!”

She concluded that the bumps were heart-bumps.

“What! . . . I suppose you mean Norman Temple?”

“Yes. He’s my second cousin, you know.”

“Of course I know. I thought he was abroad.”

“He arrives home from Ceylon to-day.

We've just had a letter overland. He says he's coming to see us. I don't know if he expects that we are going to ask him to stay, and the child. We're not!"

"Indeed! Why is he barred from that great honour?"

"Well, you see, he doesn't seem to have been a great success abroad. We can't afford the luxury of poor relations. Besides, he's only a *second* cousin, you know, and we've never had much to do with him. That was what set me thinking why he had written to us now. Of course we don't mind his just calling, and are prepared to be *civil* to him."

"Good of you! But what's it to do with me?"

"Oh, don't be so—so difficult, Betty! I'm only speaking for your good. Of course I remember the conversation that we had just after you broke it off with him."

"I was a fool to mention it to you," Miss Elizabeth said. "I don't know why I did."

That was not true. She knew very well that she had spoken in the hope that Kate might report the conversation to Norman, and that it might bring him to forgive her. (But she intended to take the line of forgiving *him*!)

"Anyhow, you did, and . . . Well, you've never married, Betty, and it hasn't been the fault of the men, if you had liked them. So I've always fancied—but we needn't go into that. The plain facts—at least, they aren't exactly facts, only the best that we can make out about him—are that he doesn't seem to have done very well for himself. He seems to have lost his wife, and to have a child, and to be pretty poor; and he asks after you, and you're a rich woman."

"Rich!" Miss Elizabeth cried. "Indeed I'm not!" ("Not rich enough to lend any more to Kate Harris," she qualified mentally. "She'd only waste it again.")

"By our modest standard you are, my dear; more so, I suppose, by his. And otherwise desirable, of course. Quite seriously, Betty, I can't help thinking that he's only coming to us to find track of *you*. It's quite your affair whether you choose to meet him. I wouldn't make it too easy if I were you. You know what men are! Of course, he mayn't come this very afternoon; but he said 'directly I arrive,' and his ship's due early this morning—*The Hope of the Clan*."

Miss Elizabeth shrieked so loudly that the 'phone rattled.

"Kate! *The Hope of the Clan*! It went down last night. . . . *Went down last night!*"

"Betty! . . . But he'll be saved . . ."

"Not one! Not one of the men. Only a few women and children. *They* were picked up by the *Adelphian*, and are coming in early this morning. Oh, Kate!"

"I wonder if his child is among them? . . . It's very unfortunate—I don't wish the child any harm, of course, but it's no use anyone thinking that *we* can have her . . . Look in the list, Betty, and see if she—"

"You brute!" Miss Elizabeth screamed. "Norman is dead! Dead! And all you think of is yourself! You selfish brute!"

She slammed the receiver on the hook. "She's given herself away," Mrs. Harris, at one end of the wire, muttered. "She always said that she'd got over it, but I knew she hadn't!"

Miss Elizabeth, at the other end of the wire, rocked to and fro in bed, with her face in her hands; talked to herself.

"Norman is dead! Norman is dead! He will never say 'Good morning, Valentine!' now. . . . Never now. . . . When a man's dead you can own to yourself—just to yourself that—that he mattered. . . . And I might have been married to him all these years! Had the right to wear black for him—black for him! Unsuccessful and poor, she says, and widowed, and asked after me. Oh, Norman, it might have all come right! Your being poor and unsuccessful wouldn't have stopped me, my dear. My dear! . . . You did mean it *then*, didn't you, Norman? Tosh I called it just now. Could you hear? . . . If there's anything in life that isn't tosh, it's death. . . . And you are dead, Norman! And I never had the chance to do anything for you! . . ."

She seized the paper suddenly.

"His child!" she cried. "His child!"

She searched the list of the survivors and found among the survivors—

Nora Temple, aged eight. (Father missing.)

"Thank God!" she cried. "I *can* do something for you, old man!"

She sprang from the bed, began to dress, rang for the hot water, talked excitedly to the maid.

("Something has happened to give the mistress a shock," the girl reported to the kitchen. "Talking with her hands and head as well as her mouth, and can't keep still.")

"Quick, Polly!" she cried, fastening her clothes with little jerks. "I have to go out



"The child woke, screamed, leapt to him, holding round his neck."

at once—at once! I'll wear my navy coat and skirt. That's the nearest to black. Tell Jarvis to be ready with the motor directly after breakfast. Then go to the 'phone and get the offices of the Hope Line—the steamship company—and put me on."

She rang every few minutes afterwards to know if the company had answered yet. The maid reported each time that the line was engaged, and finally that the operator had told her that dozens of people were waiting for it, friends and relatives of the crew and passengers of *The Hope of the Clan*, which had been wrecked in the night.

"Off Ushant, miss; and that's somewhere in France, Jarvis says. Nearly all aboard lost. It's in the paper. She said she'd call you up first opportunity, if you had someone on the ship. I said you had, ma'am. Seemed best to say so, as you were so anxious to get on. 'A near relation,' I says."

"Yes," said Miss Elizabeth. "Yes. . . . Tell cook to send up the breakfast. I must be quick."

"You hadn't anyone aboard, had you, dear?" her niece asked. She had just come smilingly to breakfast.

"Only someone who might have been someone," Miss Elizabeth said. "I was engaged to him once. . . . Marie, if ever you care for a man, don't condemn him without giving him a fair hearing. I did. If I hadn't, I suppose we should have been married for nine years. . . . Nine and a half years, Marie. Now I suppose I can't even wear black for him! . . . Don't fuss me, child. I shall only cry. . . . Do you know, I think it would be a good thing if I *could* cry." She spoke in a dull, detached voice, as if she discussed someone else. "Say 'Good morning, Valentine!' Then perhaps I can."

"Betty! . . . Auntie, dear! . . ."

"They were the last words he said to me, Marie, when I sent him away. Not for greeting—for good-bye! . . . 'Good morning, Valentine!' . . . I *can't* cry!"

"Oh, Betty, darling! . . . Dear old Betty!"

"I think I shall be able to, when I see his child. She is saved. . . . His child and—and another woman's, Marie. She might have been mine. Now she shall be. Her mother is dead. I think I shall cry all right if she is like him. He was a nice-looking boy—such a nice-looking boy. I hope she will be like him. . . . I expect he died worrying that there was no one to look after her. He wouldn't think of me. I couldn't

expect him to think of me. I suppose he'd forgotten all about me. Don't you?"

"No, no, no! Eat some breakfast, dear. . . . Isn't there *any* hope?"

"None, the paper says, none. . . . We'll be good to the little girl, won't we?"

"Yes, yes. . . . What is it, Polly?"

"The mistress is wanted on the 'phone. It's the Hope Line, ma'am."

Miss Elizabeth went quickly to the 'phone in the hall. They heard her speak, and could guess the other end of the conversation.

"Miss Stone, 4, Alexandra Mansions, speaking. . . . A dear friend of mine was on the ship. . . . Yes, I mean *The Hope of the Clan*. . . . Mr. Norman Temple. . . . Among the missing? . . . No later news? . . . No hope? . . . None at all? . . . 'Always hope!' What's the use of platitudes? . . . Well, his child is saved, I see in the papers. Nora Temple. . . . Where is she? . . . Coming up by the eleven-fifteen? Is that when it *arrives*? . . . Where? . . . I'll be at Waterloo. . . . To fetch her home to my house. . . . Yes, yes, but I don't want help, thank you, financial or otherwise. I know, I know, but I'd rather do everything for her myself. . . . I shall provide for her in some way or other. Adopt her, possibly. . . . Thank you! Yes. . . . Yes! . . . No, she has no relatives except a second cousin, who will be quite willing to resign any claim to her. . . . My lawyers will see to that. . . . Thank you! . . . I know, I know. . . . Waterloo at eleven-fifteen."

* * * * *

There was a pale little girl in the train, clinging to an elderly lady. The child seemed dazed, would not come to Miss Elizabeth at first.

"I knew your father, dear," she said. "We were great friends once. I think he would like you to like me."

The child put out a hand then.

"Did he like you?" she asked.

"Yes," said Miss Elizabeth, "once."

"Did you like him?"

"Yes," said Miss Elizabeth. She did not add the "once" that time. The elderly lady noticed that, stroked her arm.

"I was going to take her for the moment," she said, "but I couldn't afford to keep her with me. You want to take her for good, perhaps?"

"Yes," said Miss Elizabeth. "Come with Aunt Betty, dear."

The child nodded.

"But I want father, too," she said. "Do you know what day it is? He promised to be my valentine. . . . Will you be?"

"Yes," Miss Elizabeth said. "Yes. . . . Good morning, Valentine!" She spoke the greeting strangely.

"Try to cry, dear!" the elderly lady advised her.

"It is no use crying," Miss Elizabeth said stonily. "Come with Aunt Betty, Nora dear! My little Valentine! And you shall have me for yours."

"I shall always want daddy, too," the child said in the motor.

"So shall I, dear."

"Won't he ever come any more? Not ever any more? Oh, Aunt Betty, I want him so much!"

"So do I, Nora, so do I. But we must be brave. . . . I've a little doggy. His name is 'Whim.' He begs for biscuits. You will like him. . . ."

"Yes. . . . I want daddy, too."

"And a pussy, a black pussy. She comes to my door and mews in the morning. You will like her."

"Yes. . . . I want daddy, too!"

"You will break my heart, Nora. . . . You are going to like Aunt Betty better than doggie and better than pussy, aren't you?"

"Yes. . . . I want daddy, too! . . . Aunt Betty? I shan't *never* want any other Valentine—only father!"

"Neither," said Aunt Betty, "shall I! Not a real one. But you and I must *pretend* we're valentines to each other. When we come home, I shall say that I've brought my valentine!"

That was what she said, and the old house-keeper said: "Take the child away, Miss Marie, and leave your Aunt with me. She's *got* to cry. . . . Miss Betty? Miss Betty, dear? I nursed you when you were smaller than she, and I knew how it was always. . . . My dear, I swept up the verses that you tore. I know! He's only gone to be waiting for you, dearie, ready to say 'Good morning, Valentine!'"

It was the old woman who cried then. Miss Betty seemed turned to stone; but she cried at last after she had nursed Nora to sleep.

"His child," she said, "and not mine!"

That was what brought the tears. She said afterwards that she felt better, fell asleep with the sleeping child hugged close.

Marie woke her presently.

"Auntie," she said breathlessly, "can

you be brave? Very brave? Brave enough for good news? . . . There's someone who has called. One of the boats was picked up. . . ."

"Marie!"

"Let me hold you tightly. . . . It is Nora's father. . . . He is outside the door. May he come in?"

"Marie!"

Miss Elizabeth rose to her feet, laid the child in the armchair, held out both hands to the doorway.

"Good morning, Val——" she began, and stopped. For the man who entered was not Norman Temple. She knew at once, from the likeness, that it would be his brother, whom she had never seen before. He was abroad when she met Norman.

"Norman?" she gasped. "Was he aboard?"

His brother nodded.

"And—and—now——"

His brother shook his head.

"No news," he said. "Poor old chap! I *thought* you must have taken her for his child. . . . Nora! . . . Nora, my dear. . . . I told you I'd come. . . . Good morning, Valentine!"

The child woke, screamed, leapt to him, holding round his neck.

"Good *morning*, Valentine!" she cried, and clapped her hands.

Miss Elizabeth slid very quietly to the floor.

* * * * *

"Norman never married," his brother told her, after she had come to; "never would have married anyone but you. I think it was to see you that he came home with me. . . . He *said* that it was because he was tired of making money. . . . Unsuccessful! Dear me, no! Norman was a very successful man—in money. He badly wanted someone to share it with. . . . *You*, dear lady. *You!* . . . And so you were going to adopt his child. . . . Perhaps the dear old fellow knows. . . . I pray that he knows. . . ."

"And now," Miss Elizabeth murmured, "I cannot do even that for him. . . . But I am glad he is mine, all mine. . . . I *shall* hear him say it again—'Good morning, Valentine'—when I cross the line!"

* * * * *

She fell asleep that evening, and thought that she had crossed it, for she found herself in Norman's arms.

"I am glad I'm dead, boy," she said. "Life was rather—rather 'tosh' without you, and

I *knew* you'd be waiting. Old silly!" She stroked his hair, suddenly concluded that she was alive and in her own dining-room. . . . Listened to something about being picked up by a trawler, and motoring up to Town to say "Good morning, Valentine!" . . .

Clung to his coat with her face against his neck. . . .

"Now *you* say it," he told her.

"Oh, you *do* want a shave!" said Miss Elizabeth.

Then she clung to him—clung and clung.



THE WEIR.

THE weir all night its lonely song
Hums in the darkness like the wind,
Now reboant with a music strong,
Now dwindling to a clear-defined

Tinkle of silver, and anon
—This is a mystery some note—
Singing as bells do, or as one
Who sets his wondrous voice afloat

In some rich-carven oaken choir at eve,
When all the candles tall burn dim,
And in that glamour saints believe
That they do hear the seraphim.

All night for years the weir has sung,
And listening children many a time,
And fishermen whose hearts are young,
Have heard the sudden mystic chime

Among the pauses of their dreams
Of wind, and faëry lakes, and all
The shadowy galaxy that seems
To keep some sleepers' brains in thrall,

Turning to mystery the night
After the prose of the long day,
And the derisive hours of light
That bear no love to such as they!

VICTOR PLARR.



"Millicent . . . topped a diminutive pile of trinkets with her silver cigarette case."

OPPORTUNITY

By CHARLES INGE

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

THEY were both looking into a jeweller's shop in Piccadilly about the time that the lamps were beginning to twinkle into being like lights in a transformation scene of January smudge—two women, one tall, comfortably enwrapped in a mink coat, the other shorter and sparsely buttoned up in tweed.

Millicent Gore-Jenkins recognised the fine nose, the rather heavy profile, the full lips, and shied away. Tweed does not always welcome mink on a raw January afternoon. Hilda Brent turned to move on at the same moment. It was too cold for loitering even before that alluring brilliance.

Millicent smiled bravely at the inevitable, thereby ensuring the recognition she would have avoided. Yet the recognition was

almost a little deferential, in spite of the mink coat :

"Aren't you Millicent Gore-Jenkins ? Weren't you at Roedeane ? "

"Am still. You are Hilda Brent, or were."

"You can still call me so. I'm living with my brother ; he bought a practice at Sevenoaks. I'm up shopping."

Followed the conversation usual between women school-mates after some years out in the world—an interchange of information, a little spoilt because Hilda was wondering why the correct Millicent Gore-Jenkins was out unfurred in such weather, and Millicent was wondering what Hilda Brent really thought of her comparative nakedness. Also she was parrying artless inquiries with careful generalities.

With each question and answer the raw damp soaked deeper through her tweed. It was a thin tweed. Even expensive mink was not quite proof against the miasmic cold. Hilda shivered, as comfortable folk shiver, and suggested tea.

"That is, if you are not too busy?"

Millicent fashioned her reply so that there should be no doubt who was hostess—"Wherever you like"—in that deep voice of hers which, with her pronounced indifference, had been the secret of her leadership at school.

Hot tea, lights, and the cosy atmosphere of the crowded rooms reinstated her. Hilda, bereft of the advantage of mink at Millicent's suggestion, succumbed to the old unconcern which had become a sort of seasoned humour. With the opening and snapping of a diminutive silver cigarette case, followed by a small expletive, her old admiration was complete.

Millicent asked for a cigarette as if she were a guest at a club. Hilda overdid it, as she had always overdone it at school. She ordered a pretty box of six, and was corrected, as she had been corrected at school, by Millicent's refusal to fill her case.

With the first inhalation—significantly deep—Millicent dived into a half-minute reverie and came out again sharply.

"I love Sevenoaks—drove through it years ago. Lovely country!"

Hilda beamed—that is, her lazy eyes glowed deeply, "It is lovely!"—and looked for more.

That small tight face of alabaster and those unconcerned eyes had always been her ideal. She knew herself to be the large, helpless sort. She got more in between deep mouthfuls of fragrant tobacco. Millicent seemed to be unfolding, like some aloof flower acted on by the heat of the room. The light tweed was steaming slightly in the heat; but she was regal in her praise.

"And I love the country in the winter. Whereabouts is your house?"

"High up. But in the town, you know. Only a little house."

"I love little houses."

Hilda beamed again. "In a row, too. But only a row of four. Marley—my brother, you know—says they are Georgian. And, of course, the views!"

Millicent nodded across the lighting of another cigarette from the stump of her first. Having lighted it, she nodded again, this time as an expert nods at the result

of his investigations. Then she went into it finally.

Her direct admiration, tinged with a suggestion of Hilda's cleverness, her real interest in old furniture—Marley Brent collected old furniture—her desperate rhapsodies, exactly attuned, all helped to get their reward. Hilda gave the invitation as if she were asking a favour:

"And don't come just for a week-end: a proper visit. Now, when could you possibly come?"

Millicent lighted another cigarette, puckered her smooth forehead, as it might be over the multitude of her engagements, and pressed out the discarded stump in her plate with slow deliberation. The faintest colour tinged her excellent expression of wonder when she looked up.

"Do you know, I really think next week. Next Wednesday? Now, does that suit you?"

The pause that should have been Hilda's for answer she filled generously with thanks. But Hilda was delighted and said so, when she got the opportunity. At once Millicent was buttoning up, nodding at some thoughts of her own.

Outside she said, with a tightening of her lips, which may have been against the cold: "Yes, my brother will be goin' to Ceylon, plantin'. It will fit in exactly. I shall be charmed!"

Two brothers heard of the arrangement that evening.

II.

MARLEY BRENT, in a deep chair of some merit as well as comfort, accepted it as a busy man accepts any news not actually disruptive during the evening hours of relaxation before a genial fire.

He was a replica of his sister, tempered almost to asceticism by zeal in ministering to others, and perhaps a little sterilised by study, but all resemblance vanished when he spoke. The twinkle in his eyes did it.

"And will she look down her patrician—or is it merely plutocratic?—nose at our suburban routine?"

"She loves old furniture."

At that he eyed his Chippendale commodes, his William-and-Mary sofa, his Heppelwhite chairs and little unplaced bits of elegance and beauty, as other men will appraise a dog or a horse or pearls or first editions.

"I was not fearing for our furniture so much as for the subsequent meanderings

of the joint. I have always understood that the aristocracy hates hash."

May pouted—her usual defence against his humour, which she never understood—and made to speak. But he had arisen, indolently and yet with purpose. At nine-thirty by the clock each night, excepting Saturdays and Sundays, he retired to his own snug room of oak and walnut to delve into the mysteries of new disease. Marley Brent had ambitions beyond general practice, and kept in touch with the fashion.

* * * * *

Guy Gore-Jenkins heard it, an incongruous figure of lean smartness, in the frowsy sitting-room of a Pimlico apartment house, much as a condemned man hears of his reprieve. Yet his anxieties were for his sister.

"But what'll you do afterwards, Sis? You can't camp on the Sevenoaks family doctor for ever?"

Millicent, leaning on the square of shabby green baize that kindly hid the table, topped a diminutive pile of trinkets with her silver cigarette case, eyed it as if only concerned that the final coping balanced, and spoke with the satisfaction of a successful artificer.

"There! 'Fraid there ain't much gold in it, and now, as in the days of Solomon, silver is of no account. It was Solomon? But you must do your best with it."

Her brother pronounced judgment based on recent experience: "Two pounds the lot, if you are going to take 'em out again. But, Sis, afterwards? We've got to settle this. I can't leave you derelict."

Millicent smiled as Roedeane had never seen her smile, as her brother had only seen her smile lately when he came to her for advice—a transfiguration it was, wherein all that a woman wants and knows and hopes for glimmered through the wilful unconcern. With her answer came back that clipped indifference of hers.

"My dear boy, you talk as if we were new rich trying to evade super-tax, instead of . . . I shall manage. A woman always does manage, as Dad used to say. You take your chance, and I'll come out—later on, and live on curry and rice. Perhaps I'll marry the doctor and become President of the Mothers' League or the Flannel Club. Now, don't look harassed. We've got to leave here, and we mustn't both . . . I'll manage. Only get me two pound ten for these."

III.

It was with her first week's washing bill—that is, a fortnight after her arrival—that Millicent allowed herself to think of her dilemma. It was certainly a dilemma. The comfort of the Brents' home, the sense of ease and security, even Hilda's admiration and Marley's friendliness, only exaggerated it. She had lied to her brother about her funds, had seen him off from London—a reckless extravagance, but necessary in support of her deception—and now had—she counted it out on to the counterpane—a one pound note, a half-crown, two shillings, and, in copper, fourpence between her and . . .

"What?"

She said it out loud.

"What?"

She said it again later into her looking-glass, while she plied her supple hands about her black hair in preparation for dinner.

Audacity had brought her here—the audacity learned in precept from a father who shot himself rather than face the fate of an audacious trustee—audacity must get her away—"But where to?"—or keep her here—"But for how long?"

The comfortable routine of walks and shopping and quiet evenings had become a travesty of repose.

She went down the comfortably padded stairs to dinner—a spare black figure of self-possession, thinking of the London streets on a wet night and faces she had seen in doorways. They must have been discussing her, criticising her. They greeted her so cordially.

She at once engaged Marley. During dinner she enticed him into some disclosure of his ambitions. It was not difficult. They dined by candlelight off an old gate-legged table without a cloth. Hilda's efforts at appropriate meals lagged sadly behind the old silver and glass which were Marley. But they inspired Millicent; moreover, his nightly disappearance had already been a joke between them. Hilda expressed open surprise.

"Why, Marley, I had no idea! Harley Street sounds very grand. But you never warned me."

He made a joke of it, while he held a match for Millicent. "You never asked me, or I should have fallen—I expect. A man is seldom loath to talk about his ambitions to a woman, even to a sister."

That night Millicent in her room had to

stamp her foot to keep up her spirits. It was so easy to get him interested—she had learned that over his furniture—and so distasteful when she did it deliberately. She tried to excuse herself to her reflection.

"Guests are expected to be affable."

The reflection smiled and raised her eyebrows. "Guests! What about boarders?" She nodded back.

"But what can I do?"

The reflection, being as perplexed as she, gave her no assistance in this conundrum. So she grimaced at it and, getting a grimace in return, she laughed and nodded confidently—

"But there are always the advertisements."

This was no sort of help really, because her reflection knew as much as she, and looked sceptical. She had been reading the advertisements daily, and had spent precious pennies on stamped addressed envelopes for the replies that never came.

She bowed to her reflection and said: "Bed, my dear! Bed! And audacity in the morning. Good night."

It had been Hilda who was criticising her while they waited dinner, innocently wondering as to her circumstances. They knew of her brother's departure, of her father's death, the disgrace of it covered up bravely with wilful cynicisms. But of her friends and family and prospects they had heard nothing. Hilda had quite a lot of curiosity for a lethargic woman.

It was Hilda who, at the end of the next week, questioned the length of her stay. It had been a bad week for Millicent. One of her two pairs of shoes had required soling.

Hilda had borrowed six shillings from her for some ferns from an itinerant hawker, and Hilda's memory was unlikely to be good for little debts. Also there had been another washing bill. So she had expended even more graciousness on Marley, hating herself and losing all the pleasure of his



"What's the matter? Aren't you doing anything?"

conversation and personality because she was doing it as a recompense for board and lodging.

It was at tea-time on Sunday, before Millicent had come back from a walk, that Hilda spoke.

"She has said nothing yet about leaving, Marley. Isn't it a little odd?"

"Not being present at the invitation, I withhold an opinion. How long has she been here?"

"Oh, if you don't mind, I don't."

This show of exaggerated indifference from Hilda got him definitely from his

our routine. I do not mind. But what is your particular trouble?"

Hilda pouted. She found pouting as useful against his insight as against his humour, and her naïve admiration for Millicent had been slowly curdling to a sort of helpless disapproval. This she would keep from him, because his interest in Millicent was the cause.



"'I asked her to marry me.' . . . 'Marley—well?' 'She fainted.'"

book. His look was wholly whimsical. "And why exactly should I mind? She is—good company, leaven in the dough of

"Well?"

He had diagnosed the case a week ago—certain thumbnail marks in the advertise-

ment columns of the paper had been his clue—but he was reluctant to say. The tragedy and comedy of it were too closely interwoven; also he was quite sure that his sister would not understand.

Hilda pouted again and welcomed the sound of the front door as an escape from further discussion. “Ah, here she is! You know she never gets any letters. Marley, can I ask her?”

He weighed his words. “Obviously you can; but I do not think I would. I expect she is one of the easy-going kind who stay on where they are comfortable without thinking. It’s a compliment, isn’t it?”

It was a burlesque of his diagnosis of her position and her character. But he made up for it when she came in, the whiteness of her faintly tinged with the glow of walking, and yet with no answering glow in her eyes, only a sort of veiled perplexity. He saw, even while she enthused about the trees, and very nearly told her—would have done, had not his sister been there. Instead he put her into his easy-chair and handed her the toast.

“Walking alone is best for seeing things, but you have to be free to look.”

She stopped with a piece of toast between finger and thumb to stare at him; it was little less than a gape. Then she was back again behind her defences of wonderful unconcern. “Now, what do you mean by that? It is when you are alone that you are free.”

He refused the challenge. It was too easy. With a few words he could have walked through her defences, could have sent her marching to London from very pride. He put her tea on the Chippendale commode beside her with a manner of protection, and while he talked to her, like a lecturer, about the beauty of trees in winter, he marvelled at her courage and wondered how he could help.

She listened, nodding and putting in an occasional appreciation that helped him on to further discourse, as Hilda had never done, wondering all the time whether he had guessed.

Thus their conversation became a masquerade, except to Hilda, who intervened with a sort of large playfulness which with her stood for decision; to her their intimacy was a crisis.

Millicent knew of her changed attitude; she was on the look-out for signs. It was one more grain of irony, one more thorn of compunction, an added goad to her help-

lessness. She found herself going about the house softly like a trespasser, as if with the beginning of the fourth week her presence had become effrontery liable to be questioned. Each day she waited some *dénouement*. Each evening she felt that another day would be intolerable. Yet another day came and went, and another and another.

When she found herself agreeing with Hilda’s easy, quite brainless assertions—something to do with her indifferent house-keeping—for fear of a retort, she went upstairs and began to pack; stopped with her box half full, went downstairs again, and deliberately, almost bluntly, refuted Hilda’s statements long after Hilda had forgotten all about them. The retort she had courted purposely never came. Instead, Hilda was admitting a want of capacity humbly, once more under thrall to Millicent’s superior intelligence. That left her again with her own interminable arguments and her helplessness.

In the evening she got her first letter from Guy, posted at Aden. He was worrying still, and had asked her again whether she could hold on; if not, she was to cable to him in Ceylon.

“What’s the cost of a cable to Ceylon?” she asked.

Hilda was working as usual at a child’s garment that no child would ever wear with pleasure. Marley was unusually idle, smoking and staring into the fire, but he answered at once:

“About two shillings a word, I fancy.”

She nodded. “Yes, I thought so”—and smiled again, quite broadly for her, so that her short nose wrinkled visibly. He startled her out of her absurd calculations.

“Would you care to come and look it up?”

She stared. This time her intuition could not be denied. It was so seldom she had to fight a blush that the inevitable defeat seemed inexcusable.

“Any time will do, thanks.”

The twinkle in his eyes softened to a beam of sympathy. “No time like the present; an axiom of success, I believe?”

She could not mistake him now, and answered with a tightening of her lips to control them: “And about as true as early to bed, etcetera.” She spoke even more decidedly as he got up. “I can wait, Doctor Brent, thanks.”

He was holding the door open for her. Hilda looked up from her knitting:

“Why not go and get Whitaker, Marley?”

Neither of them took any notice of her, being both engaged in their duel of wills. But Millicent heard and made it an excuse for going.

In his room, so restful in its dark furniture and green, a veritable haven of books and shaded light, she confronted him. The established comfort of the place mocked her.

"You know I am not going to cable to Ceylon, Doctor Brent."

"I know you are not."

"Then why . . . ?"

She had to stop. She held on to her hands, as if she would climb back to her audacity by them. He was speaking again, fingering a little pile of books on the top of his bureau.

"Am I to answer your question ?"

"But you don't know what I was going to say."

It was a fine effort, because she felt slipping over a precipice, with her own weight dragging against her recovery. Again his voice, very soft :

"A doctor's job is mostly guessing, Miss Gore-Jenkins."

"And yet we die ?"

She was not quite over yet, though she was very near the edge. And then he came—she wide-eyed and inquisitive at his coming—and took her hands :

"Can I lend you money ? No, don't pull away. Heroines, I know, refuse all monetary assistance with disdain ; but in real life . . . Or will you stay on here—until—until . . ." He let go her hands quickly, leaned backwards a little to look at her, and smiled as one who has been taken splendidly by surprise. His surprise widened and took hold, possessing him with a sudden quite unprofessional boyishness. "Do you know, I had no idea of this when we came in here. At least, I don't believe—and yet I suppose I must have. . . ."

"You knew a week ago, Doctor Brent, at any rate on Sunday."

"I didn't ! Millicent——"

"What ?"

She had stepped back, her small tight face all puckered up in sudden horror at his tone, when Hilda appeared in the doorway, knitting.

"Can't you two find the Whitaker between you ?"

Something in the wording of the question, some contrast within him to her serene inquiry, fired Marley to a glorious audacity. Consequently he spoke with professional exactitude.

"Miss Gore-Jenkins has had rather a

shock, I'm afraid. She's got to go to bed at once, and doesn't like the idea. Nothing infectious."

He went on to speak of an obscure ailment, seldom met with in this country, of almost unmistakable symptoms, of the lucky chance that had enabled him to suspect them. He used a good many technical terms, while he held Millicent with his eyes, in which there was now no twinkle, only a very wise appeal.

"And she's worrying about the length of her stay. You tell her, Hilda. I am not prepared to certify her fit to go."

Hilda was all distress, her recent disapproval instantly submerged in sympathy and pleasurable excitement at the prospect of nursing. Marley cut into her condolences.

"The sooner in bed the better, Miss Gore-Jenkins, please. You may be all right. But I am a doctor and responsible. We can send that cable to your brother—if you still want it to go ?"

At that Millicent went.

He prescribed a hot-water bottle and light diet ; and Hilda, having someone to nurse, was happy and grateful to Millicent for providing her with an invalid.

Millicent did not sleep much that night. Her original horror at his tone stayed with her as an accusation. She had never intended that. Yet she got some comfort, fight it as she might, from the sense of relief. Subterfuge with him, at least, was no longer necessary, and she got a little unwilling humorous appreciation of his method. So long as she obeyed his instructions, her dilemma was in abeyance.

But with morning and Hilda's complacent joy in an invalid, came rebellion, and then an exact recollection of the contents of her purse, the very coins. So her rebellion became a mere complaint.

"But I won't stay in bed all day when I'm feeling quite fit !"

Hilda sent Marley to her.

He came, bringing a bottle of medicine, the twinkle back in his eyes, though a little subdued. She tried to be haughty from the pillow and found it a failure. He apologised.

"It was the only way I could think of. Besides, you have worried yourself to shreds, and I don't wonder." Then the boyishness suffused his face. She saw it coming and turned her face to the wall. It came, all the same, that tone of yesterday. "Of course there is an easy way out."

"Doctor Brent, don't make me more ashamed !"

"You know I would not do that. I am not going to say any more just now. A week or so in bed will do you no end of good. When you feel willing or able to discuss—a way out—I'll prescribe a short stay downstairs for tea, say."

At that she turned, intending an outburst of indignation; again she found it a failure with the sheets tucked under her chin. All she achieved was a cry of helplessness and chagrin:

"Can't you see how I must feel about it? And I can't answer you properly in bed!"

"Can you answer me properly downstairs?" And then, because he saw the coming tears: "I know what you think you ought to feel, and it's quite wrong. I am not a young innocent, and you are not the wicked adventuress. When I guessed—your position—I only thought of your pluck. But obstinacy isn't pluck. What have you got left?"

"Two half-crowns, a florin, and five coppers."

"And no relations or friends?"

"No relations. No friends who would bother about me now. Even if I had, I can't go to them with seven and fivepence! It was effrontery to come here!"

He nodded as if he quite agreed with her in some quite ordinary statement. "Well, I must go now." Then he spoke differently. "Don't be obstinate or high-falutin'. You have been so fine."

Then he left her. When Hilda came to her again she was openly crying. Hilda soothed her, enwrapping about her a large tenderness, and gave her her medicine.

"Nasty?"

Millicent looked in envy of her simple comfortableness. "It has no taste whatsoever."

Hilda made that out a bit of luck. "Not like Marley's medicines, as a rule. I always tell him they are beastly."

For three days Millicent lay, dozing, reading a little, getting benefit from the rest—a prisoner oscillating between rebellion and the luxury of relief. It was a limited oscillation, if violent. Because when she turned towards rebellion she came up against the contents of her purse; if she sought relief she encountered Marley and his boyishness and his soft voice.

He had not been to see her since his first visit. Hilda had already assumed the critical attitude of a hospital nurse towards him.

"Rest and quiet! Rest and quiet! That's

all I can get out of him. I told him you had finished your medicine."

Millicent begged her not to worry him, rather in the manner of a thief asking a policeman not to bother. But Hilda rose to authority in a sick-room, and attempted a snort, such as she believed was usual from the nurse towards the doctor in his absence.

It set Millicent gyrating more violently than ever within the narrow compass of her alternatives, until, like a quivering spring coming to rest, she discovered she had no alternative. She had but exchanged one dilemma for another. She could not stay in bed for ever—a captive or the inmate of an almshouse.

That was just before her tea was brought, and a faint firelight was flickering on the dim walls, so gratefully that—for all her good intentions—the new dilemma got mixed up with thoughts about the assured comfort of a home and Marley's chivalry.

She was half out of bed in a quick determination to get up to fight her wistfulness, when someone knocked at the door. Instinct told her it was Marley; the same instinct demanded that she should be asleep. Her return was stealthy but rapid.

Quite a different instinct demanded, after her tea had been brought, that she should get up and definitely extricate herself from her new dilemma. In the gaslight it appeared more difficult than the first.

She dressed in guilty haste, and yet not carelessly. Hilda arrived as she was putting the last elaborate touches to her hair and dress, such as are essential for special occasions. To the authoritative surprise and inquiries she answered at random, having no plan, only a sort of chaotic resolution—

"I am quite cured. I won't stay in bed any longer! And I must leave you to-morrow."

Said Hilda in quite the proper manner: "Nonsense! Get back to bed at once. I am going for Marley."

That left her standing irresolute, facing the old battalions of argument. But Marley did not come; nor was he in the drawing-room when she got down, very shaky about the legs now that she was up, and painfully conscious of all the old helplessness and difficulties. She had no plan, nor any more possibilities of getting one than when she went to bed.

Hilda received her in the grumps, a figure of outraged importance, knitting by the fire. "He doesn't seem to mind one way

or the other. I don't understand either of you."

"Where is he?"

"In his room. Didn't even stop writing when I told him. I don't pretend to understand."

"I think I'll go and see him."

"What for?"

"Well, I want to tell him."

Hilda sniffed, still reluctant to give up the manner and privileges of a nurse. "Go, by all means, if you wish. He is not fond of disobedient patients. I told him I only arrived after you were dressed. He did not seem to mind that, either."

Millicent went, with an odd swimmy sensation in her head that got worse as she turned the handle of the door. Her voice, too, sounded odd, as she announced herself—

"I'm up."

"So I see."

He left his bureau without haste, standing up formally, no longer a doctor, but a man awaiting a verdict. She got to a chair, holding on to the back of it.

"And I am going away to-morrow. Please, I must!"

She had seen his smile. It was charged with a reproof, with a reminder, a little whimsical, a little shy, yet wholly protective.

"Where to? I don't want to rub it in."

Then only the chair seemed steady to her in the room. He was coming to her, not as he had come before, but radiant with

a purpose, making to rub out something with his hand.

"I'm a fraud! I do and I will rub it in! Millicent. . ."

* * * * *

Hilda, waiting, heard the thump of overturned furniture in his room, and went, ready pouting with injured dignity, though she took her knitting with her. What she saw wiped out her grievance.

Millicent was lying, prone and motionless and more white than ever, on the couch between the windows. Marley was standing by, watching. His inactivity gave her back her indignation—

"What's the matter? Aren't you doing anything?"

He smiled easily, putting up a hand to curb her nervousness.

"I've done it already."

"What?"

"I asked her to marry me."

Hilda's mouth came open fish-wise; for once some active emotion showed in her eyes: "Marley—well?"

"She fainted."

Later, when Millicent was once more back in bed, a silent, docile Millicent, smiling a little now and then and very grateful to Hilda for her renewed activities, the doctor asked a diagnosis of the nurse.

Marley went into his sister's room to ask it—

"Do you think it was a good sign?"



TORCH SONG.

I SEE your torch alight—
This, God has let me know;
Mine is burning low,
But shall be trimmed to-night

And loneliness and fear
Shall not put out the flame,
For God is still the same,
And this is a New Year.

SYBIL RUEGG.



“ Well, little boy ’—Miss Wentworth spoke to him kindly—‘ have you enjoyed yourself this afternoon ? ’ ”

AN INTERFERING FEMALE

By REGINALD HEBER POOLE

ILLUSTRATED BY HUTTON MITCHELL

“ YOU are quite sure, dear ? ” Geoffrey Corkran asked for the nineteenth time in sixty minutes. “ It seems too wonderful to me. Of course, as the wife of a schoolmaster, there will be days of monotony, but there will also be—— ”

“ I know, Geoffrey,” Beatrice Wentworth interrupted, and she had not the slightest intention of being rude. The fact that she knew exactly what Corkran was going to say had nothing to do with her desire to

interrupt him. She just wanted to tell him, as she had done eighteen times in the past sixty minutes, that in her opinion the mere thought that she was going to have an influence over the lives of future builders of Empire was an inspiration and a joy to her.

Geoffrey Corkran, big and strong, felt a thrill pass through him as he heard her views. From the moment when he had first seen Beatrice Wentworth his feelings had been those of Geraint when first he

looked on Enid: "Here, by God's rood, is the one maid for me." Fuller knowledge had confirmed his early judgment.

It is just as well to mention at once that Geoffrey Corkran was not an ordinary man. As an athlete and as a scholar he had done brilliant things; as a leader of men in perilous times he had distinguished himself. There were a few who thought that he was wasting his talents as a schoolmaster, but others, knowing his enthusiasm, admired his broad unselfishness.

At the moment when this history begins he was a master at Nessford, a school where they really do turn out the Empire builders, even though they don't brag about it. Within a term or two Corkran would be a house-master, and there was a rumour that this was merely a preliminary step. The governors had already marked him down as the ideal successor to the present Head.

If he had sought the wide world, Corkran could not have chosen a better mate than Beatrice Wentworth. At seven-and-twenty she was still quite young, but had had experience of life. The fact that from the age of twenty-one she had been her own mistress, and possessed a pleasant income, was no bar to marriage. Corkran himself was not entirely penniless.

No. Condensing the whole history and character of the two into one short paragraph, you had an ideal match. A very charming girl with sound common-sense was going to marry a very splendid man. Each would help the other, and the two together would have a very big influence on many bright youths.

"I shall try to learn something of school life," Beatrice said several times before they parted. "I must try to understand the boy's mind and his point of view. And I am to come and see the school on—what date did you say?"

"Founder's Day," Corkran told her. "But I shall write and tell you all about it before then. It is too wonderful to think——"

All this happened during the Easter holidays. By the time Corkran returned to his duties at Nessford the formal engagement had been announced to their friends, and everybody realised that here was one of those perfect romances with which nothing could interfere.

Mr. Corkran returned to Nessford. His form was the Remove, and it was the sort of proposition that breaks the heart of the average master. Geoffrey Corkran, being a student of human nature, especially so far

as it related to boys, had nearly broken the hearts of the twenty-two boys who comprised the Remove.

As a form the Remove was—well, even Mr. Dollond, who was a very benevolent man, said that they were "a prize collection of young hooligans, with hereditary instincts towards lawlessness and an amazing capacity for avoiding work."

It was the stiffest form to handle at Nessford, and that was why Mr. Corkran had got the job. The members of the Remove respected him, nor did they have reason to suspect during that long summer term that Mr. Corkran was in love, and that in many of his letters he wrote sentimentally concerning his form.

Meantime Miss Wentworth, with that steady, quiet enthusiasm which was characteristic of her, was pursuing her theoretical study of schoolboys and schools. "Tom Brown's Schooldays," "Stalky & Co.," "Eric," as well as a host of miscellaneous stories, were thoroughly and analytically perused. By the time Founder's Day at Nessford came round, her ideas of school life had undergone considerable modifications, and she was anxious to learn further facts at first-hand.

For her visit to the school she went to stay with friends who lived not far from Nessford. General Sir Charles Redwood was a Governor of the school. He was one of the most kind-hearted men in the world, but he liked to speak of himself as one of the old school, and to pose before his daughters as a perfect specimen of the fire-eating soldier. It never deceived them in the least, nor did he deceive Beatrice Wentworth until he began to discuss education with her.

"Getting too namby-pamby schools are nowadays," he asserted. "Thank Heaven, we've got one or two men of the right stamp at Nessford. Geoffrey Corkran is a good man. No nonsense about him. He's taming those young cubs of his at the end of a long stick, and that's the proper way to teach boys. Makes men of 'em! I remember when I was at school——"

It seemed that when the General was at school he spent most of his time in suffering or causing others to suffer. But it had done him no harm. On the contrary, it had made a man of him. They employed the same methods at Nessford, and they were making men there.

Beatrice listened and even argued. It would be scarcely correct to say that she believed all that the General told her, and

she felt confident that Geoffrey did not share his views in their entirety. She hoped, indeed — But all her reading and discussion had left her vaguely perturbed.

"I must try to find out something for myself to-morrow," Beatrice decided, and the decision consoled her to some extent. Yet somehow she felt that she was on the eve of a sad disillusionment, and she looked forward to Founder's Day, not gladly and happily, but with a kind of sorrowful determination.

II.

FOUNDER'S DAY at Nessford is even more important than Speech Day. On the whole, it is a lighter, more free-and-easy function, and everybody—or nearly everybody—enjoys it whole-heartedly.

From two o'clock until four-thirty Miss Beatrice Wentworth certainly enjoyed it. Several times she had brief chats with Mr. Corkran, but she begged him not to let her presence interfere with his duties, and for various reasons Corkran was anxious not to advertise his pleasure in her company too strongly. As yet his form had no inkling of the truth. Corkran's intention was that they should merely learn that he was a married man after their return from the summer holidays.

There was one person in the school who had most emphatically not enjoyed Founder's Day. Jimmy Cloud, commonly known as "The Babe," became more and more fed up as the afternoon dragged on. By four-thirty he felt that if he stayed in Big Hall any longer he should do something desperate, and he knew that this would be a mistake. His form-master, Mr. Corkran, had specifically warned him this morning that if he tried any of his well-known stunts on this afternoon, he would most certainly be for the highest of high jumps.

One's first impression of Cloud was that he was a very nice little boy of twelve years or so. He had fairish hair and very big blue eyes and the complexion of a well-nurtured two-year-old. When bored to tears his rosebud mouth took on a sorrowful droop which made kind-hearted ladies want to kiss him.

Actually Jimmy was fifteen and as hard as nails. On occasion his little jaw would stick out with truly ferocious spirit, and those baby-blue eyes were more often gleaming with excitement, or anger, or just sheer devilry, than wearing that sad, pathetic look which had earned for him the nickname of "The Babe."

He was in Mr. Corkran's form, and Mr. Corkran admitted that it was good for him to have someone like the Babe under him. It kept him alert and prevented him from growing conceited over his powers as a disciplinarian. Twice in the past six months the Head had seriously considered whether it would not be wise to relieve Nessford of Cloud's presence, but he agreed with Mr. Corkran that there were great possibilities in the boy, and the master of the Remove had carried on with the task.

But you can understand the Babe's position to-day. His two particular pals, Bill Erskine and old Rawlins, were big, hefty youths, and they had been roped in to hand round tea and cakes to the visitors. Cloud couldn't associate with the kids of the Fourth and Third, and he remained a solitary, lonely figure all the afternoon.

"I'm fed!" the Babe decided, and wandered quietly to the door. Barely had he got through when the door opened again and one of the charming visitors who caused all this fuss followed Cloud.

Cloud, of course, did not know that Miss Wentworth had been watching him for some time past. She had observed his loneliness, and all her womanly sympathies were aroused by the pathos in those baby eyes and the sadness of those drooping lips.

"Well, little boy"—Miss Wentworth spoke to him kindly—"have you enjoyed yourself this afternoon?"

It was meant to be sympathetic, but if there was one thing the Babe loathed, it was for anyone to address him as "little boy." He hated it when big, stalwart men did it, but he writhed with fury when some "interferin' female" tried it on him.

He knew them so well. Never a Speech Day, nor Founder's Day, nor Sports Day came but what some fatuous, blithering female person beamed upon the Babe and said: "What a sweet little boy! And have you won a prize, little boy?"

On such occasions Cloud's attitude varied. Sometimes a deep retort and a swift retirement; at other times he played up to them, and told the story to Erskine and Rawlins later.

To-day he really hadn't much time to weigh up his course. Miss Wentworth was chatting to him before he could think of the right retort. He gathered, as they wandered across the court, that she wanted to know a good many things, and that she was keenly interested in school life. The Babe said "Yes" and "No," and agreed to show the

visitor some of the interesting items of the school, but it was not until she asked him some queer question about bullying that Cloud really grasped the trend of the conversation. He had met them before. Probably she had a nephew or some relative, and was trying to find out whether Nessford was quite the right place for him. In his own mind Cloud promptly decided that it wasn't. Any relative of any interfering female wasn't wanted at Nessford.

"I don't think there's so much now as there used to be," the Babe said fearfully. "I mean— You won't tell anyone if I tell you anything I oughtn't to, will you?"

"I shall tell no one," Beatrice Wentworth assured him.

"I did once tell a visitor about the cock-pit," the Babe went on, "and then they got to know about it. Mr. Corkran told me this morning that he would flay me alive if I said anything like that again."

"Mr. Corkran said that?" Beatrice asked, and the Babe answered her quite truthfully. The master of the Remove had most certainly threatened to flay Cloud if he did various things, such as exploding Chinese crackers during tea, or releasing tame mice, or any one of the patent stunts which Cloud had invented and successfully worked.

"That's the cockpit," Cloud told her presently, and began to stray violently from the truthful path. He gathered that the visitor wanted stories of bullying, and he decided that she should have them.

Beatrice Wentworth examined the marks on the walls where, according to the Babe's story, the heads of boys (who were trussed and gagged), had crashed while giving a lifelike imitation of an old-time cock-fight. The description was taken from some wonderful story Cloud had once read, and it sounded very realistic.

He told her other stories, taken from "Tom Brown," or "Eric," or some other story. Some of them Miss Wentworth recognised as being exactly what she had read. The confirmation of the fact that these brutal methods still existed filled her with amazement.

They went to the study which Cloud shared with Bill Erskine and Rawlins. By this time Miss Wentworth had exhibited her own knowledge by talking in expert fashion of "fags." In doing so she confirmed the Babe in his opinion that he had here one of the simplest victims for quite the best leg-pulling stunt he had worked for some time.

"Of course I ought not to be telling you all this," Cloud was saying, and he felt pleased with the touch of sorrow which he believed he got into his voice. "But it is so seldom one meets someone who can understand and sympathise with a boy——"

He would have told her quite a wonderful yarn but for the fact that an interruption came. From somewhere further down the corridor came the sound of two inharmonious voices trying to give a falsetto rendition of "Kind, kind, and gentle is she, Kind is my Mary." It was the favourite vocal exercise of Bill Erskine and Tommy Rawlins, and they were obviously coming to their study.

In a flash the Babe recognised his almost hopeless position. The two would come in, they would be introduced to the interfering female, Miss Wentworth, and in about two minutes they would be telling her not to believe the Babe's yarns. Inside of five minutes the female would discover that it was a well-known habit of Jimmy Cloud's to tell fairy stories. Later she would probably complain, and once again the Babe would be in the soup. At all costs it must be prevented. How?

Jimmy's quick eyes had observed the silver hat-pin which, under the stress of emotion, Miss Wentworth had taken from her hat and laid on the table. It was only a short affair, but the sight of it set the Babe's quick-acting brain working furiously.

He jumped to his feet and, even as he did so, quietly gained possession of the hat-pin.

"I—I oughtn't to be here—doing nothing," he stammered. "They're coming, and I haven't got their tea. I—I hope——"

He went to the door and opened it just as Erskine and Rawlins arrived there. The door swung back, so that for the moment Miss Wentworth was hidden from view.

"I—I'm so sorry," the Babe quavered, and at the same moment jabbed about two inches of hat-pin into Bill Erskine's leg. "I—haven't got tea ready yet, but——" Two inches of hat-pin went firmly and fiercely into Rawlins's leg. "Oh, please, don't!"

Bill Erskine and Rawlins didn't know what this latest game of the Babe's was. All they knew was that, without the slightest warning or provocation, Jimmy Cloud had jabbed them with some fearful instrument. Quite possibly, if they didn't act swiftly, he would do it again, and then skip out of their way.

"Oh, my hat!" Erskine yelled. "I'll

murder you, Babe, for this! Collar him, Tommy! Now! Knock his little head off his blinking shoulders! Make him wish——"

"Screw his arms out of their sockets!" Tommy Rawlins gasped, as they both flung themselves on the Babe and bore him to the floor. "Oh, but you're going through the hoop for this, my lad! Break

"Oh, don't, Rawlins! Please, don't!" he wailed, even while they went on uttering the most blood-curdling and fearsome threats.

Actually they didn't get very far in the job of teaching the Babe his well-merited lesson. Miss Wentworth was a horrified spectator and auditor. She had stood up—right the moment the avalanche entered



"Oh, don't, Rawlins! Please, don't!" he wailed."

every bone in the reptile's body, Bill! Bump him!"

In the centre of the room the two were on the smaller boy. They may have been surprised at the ease with which the Babe let them get him down. Normally he was more elusive than an eel, but to-day he went to the floor quite easily.

the room, and now she called aloud for this sacrifice to cease.

"Stop!" Her voice had a touch of the dramatic in it. "You boys ought to be ashamed to bully——"

They stopped instantly. Bill Erskine and Rawlins jumped to their feet, and realised that they had been guilty of

unseemly conduct in the presence of a visitor.

"Sorry! Awfully sorry!" Bill murmured. "Didn't know— Mean to say— Awfully sorry!"

Rawlins made a few similar remarks. Together the two did the disappearing act

said, and she honestly thought that she did.

Half an hour later Miss Wentworth, pleading a headache as an excuse for silence, was returning to the Redwoods' house, and she was pondering deeply on all she had learned this afternoon. Somehow



"Miss Wentworth was a horrified spectator and auditor."

in record time. They felt foolish, and realised that explanations might be a nuisance.

The Babe remained, his nice hair rather ruffled and his clean collar slightly soiled. He was panting a little, too, and this gave a pathetic tremor to his voice.

"I'm very sorry," he murmured gently. "But—I think you ought to go. I— You won't tell anyone, will you? Please don't mention my name. If they knew I'd sneaked— But you do understand?"

"I do understand," Miss Wentworth

she must talk it over quite frankly with Geoffrey.

About the same time the Babe was strolling across the playing-fields arm-in-arm with Bill Erskine and Tommy Rawlins.

"But what was the giddy idea in that jabbing business of yours, Babe?" Bill asked. "Mean to say, I really did feel wild for a minute."

"Forgive and forget," said the Babe gently. "Only I got tied up with one of those inquiring females. Suppose she's got some lop-eared nephew somewhere, and

she's afraid they'll bully the poor child if he comes to Nessford. I think she spotted me because of my kind face, and of course she'd have asked me to look after the kid, and all that sort of thing. But I'm finished with being nursemaid to any more little pets, so I just choked her off. You two lads gave a top-hole exhibition of the big bully business! But your language was shockin', Bill. I was quite pained."

"You're a bit of an ass, Babe," Rawlins said cheerfully. "Only hope old Corky doesn't hear about it. You'll be for the high jump, my lad, if he does!"

"I shouldn't worry," said Cloud quite contentedly. The day had not been without its compensations, after all.

III.

"My dear Beatrice," said Geoffrey Corkran, and there was a faint note of irritation in his voice, "I assure you that you are quite mistaken. Either someone has deliberately misled you——"

"Perhaps you will tell me that bullying does not exist at your school?" Beatrice Wentworth asked, and her voice was dangerously calm and quiet.

So far as Corkran was concerned, the Founder's Day had been a huge success, until he had that looked-for chance of a quiet talk with Beatrice. The pleasant talk which he had anticipated on the following day had developed into a very trying discussion on the methods employed at Nessford School.

At first he had laughed away as fairly tales her suggestions that boys were trussed and made to fight while hopping about the floor. But Beatrice was entirely unconvinced by his contradictions.

"Bullying?" Corkran repeated the word scornfully. "Of course there's no bullying! It's perfectly absurd!"

"Perhaps you will assure me that I did not see any with my own eyes?" Beatrice asked. "I saw myself two big boys fling themselves on a very small boy and threaten to break every bone in his body. Apparently he had forgotten to get their tea ready——"

"Oh, it's nonsense!" Corkran interrupted, and that really finished the conversation. It is always difficult in these cases to decide who made the mistake. Certainly Beatrice resented the flat contradictions Corkran made; had he expressed ignorance and amazement, she would not have been so angry. And most certainly Corkran was surprised that one so sensible

as Beatrice should ask him to believe such foolish stories.

The conversation ended rather abruptly. Beatrice very quietly, and without any dramatic touches, took the ring from her finger and put it on the table.

"Perhaps, after all, I have not the right temperament for a master's wife," she said very steadily. "I am quite sure that I could never help you in your work. My point of view is obviously very different from yours. I am very sorry."

She pushed the ring gently towards him. "Good-bye, Mr. Corkran," she said, still quite steadily. "If—if we have made a mistake, we can still—meet as friends."

Corkran had been irritated, annoyed, then amazed. For a moment he had a vague feeling that if this sort of thing were going to happen, it was just as well to finish with it right now. He was certainly not in the mood to make any heartbroken pleas.

"Very good." He nodded his head in a manner which the boys of the Remove knew full well. "If you have quite made up your mind——"

Beatrice had almost reached the door, but she turned for a moment.

"I have quite made up my mind," she said, then turned again and opened the door.

It was just at that moment a horrible thought flashed through Corkran's mind. Beatrice had not told him how she made all these discoveries, and he had imagined them as being oddments gathered here and there, or results based on brief scraps of conversations, or foolish imaginings founded on the chance sight of two small boys having a playful scrap. Now into his mind came a picture of James Cloud.

"Beatrice!" Corkran called out just as she was passing out. "Just one moment, please. It may be I can explain. You didn't by any chance meet a boy called Cloud yesterday afternoon? A nice little boy with big blue eyes and baby face?"

Beatrice turned, but her face flushed a little.

"I am afraid I cannot sneak," she said, and had the feeling that she had made quite a good point. But Corkran had observed the flush, and a wild hope welled up in his mind that, after all, this tragedy was only another of the many comedies young Cloud had staged.

"No, of course not," Corkran agreed. "I don't want you to do that. But young Cloud—we call him the Babe—is in my form, and I know him well. I've told you

the story of 'The Babe and the Gifted Authoress,' haven't I? Let me tell you now."

He told her. Then he told another story in which the Babe had fooled Mr. Corkran and the Head himself. Beatrice, without admitting anything, began to weaken.

"But even supposing it was this boy," she asked, "you don't suggest that he could possibly have arranged the fight in the study for my benefit? No one knew we were there, yet, without a word of warning, the bigger boys attacked him. How can you explain——"

"I can't explain," Corkran said cheerfully. "But look here, Beatrice, come back with me to Nessford. We'll probably be there in time for tea. I'll arrange everything. I know it was young Cloud. I'll flay him alive, the young scoundrel!"

"You—you threatened him yesterday morning?" Beatrice said.

"Of course I did," Corkran answered. "I admit it cheerfully. But you needn't worry about him. I shall forgive him. Let's go to the school now. Do come, Beatrice, and we'll discuss everything afterwards."

Somewhere about a quarter to five Bill Erskine, the Babe, and Tommy Rawlins were having a very pleasant brew in their own study, when a tap came at the door. Outside, though they didn't know it, Mr. Corkran was whispering to Miss Wentworth: "Just watch young Cloud's face. It will interest you."

Then, in response to the call to enter, Mr. Corkran opened the door and smiled gladly on the three.

"I'm just wandering round the school with Miss Wentworth," he explained genially. "Miss Wentworth is a great friend of mine, and she's very keen, as I am myself, on meeting a real genuine school bully. You haven't seen any bullies knocking round, have you?"

Erskine and Rawlins looked perplexed. They recognised Miss Wentworth at once. This was going to be a jolly awkward thing to explain, and they wished once again that the Babe wouldn't play his giddy stunts.

Miss Wentworth observed that the Babe's face became less babyish. She saw the queer little smile which twisted his lips, and noticed the way in which his jaw seemed to come out. The blue eyes had a glint in them which wasn't at all a wondering look. Yet he kept them firmly fixed on Mr. Corkran.

He spoke just as Erskine was beginning

excusingly, "Well, sir," in the hope of helping the Babe out of this mess.

"It's all my fault, sir," Cloud interrupted. "I didn't understand Miss Wentworth was a friend, sir. I thought—I only thought she was one of these interferin' females—I mean I thought she just wanted to see—school bullies, sir, like they write about in the school stories, sir. I thought—well, I thought something ought to be done, sir. So I just annoyed my friends a bit. They couldn't hurt me, sir—I mean, I wouldn't let them do that, sir."

"I am sure you wouldn't, Cloud," Mr. Corkran said pleasantly.

"But how did you arrange it?" Miss Wentworth now spoke. "It all happened so quickly. You couldn't have made it up beforehand?"

"No," Cloud admitted, "I didn't do that, but when I heard them coming, I knew something ought to happen. And you'd left this." He fumbled in his pocket and produced a short silver hat-pin. "I picked this from the table, when you weren't looking, and just gave my chums a jab each. Of course it made them wild. I mean—it would make anybody wild, sir, wouldn't it?"

"My—hat-pin!" Beatrice Wentworth gasped, and Cloud returned it to her. She took it weakly as she sank into a chair, but her eyes were still fixed on Cloud's face.

Then she covered her face with her hands. For a moment Cloud thought she was weeping, but when she struggled to her feet again he realised that it was laughter. She struggled to speak; her face was flushed and her eyes were moist, and at last, in desperation, she turned to Corkran for help.

Mr. Corkran was smiling cheerfully. The three boys merely looked bored. This might be a joke, but how were they going to come out of it?

Mr. Corkran whispered something to Miss Wentworth, and now a new sparkle came into her eyes.

"Thank you very much for the hat-pin," she said, and controlled her voice quite well. "I shall hope to see you again in the future, as I shall often come to the school. But I must say that I do think yesterday you were a very—naughty—little—boy!"

"A very naughty little boy, Cloud!" said Corkran, and his eyes were like the eyes of Rawlins and Erskine. They sparkled in the joy of a great joke. "Don't forget, Cloud! A naughty—little—boy!"

Mr. Corkran and Miss Wentworth went out. Before they reached the end of the corridor they could hear Erskine and Rawlins chanting the words in delight: "A naughty little boy! Oh, naughty little boy!"

"That's made him sorry for himself," Mr. Corkran said cheerfully. "Making the punishment fit the crime. 'Naughty little boy!' That's refined bullying, Beatrice,

and you've done it! But you do believe now that there really is no bullying at Nessford?"

"I do believe it," Beatrice assured him. "But I think there ought to be. Did you grasp what he thought of me? An interfering female! Tell me some more stories about your boys, Geoffrey."

"We'll go and have tea first, dear," Corkran said, and smiled happily.



THE TIDAL TOWN.

I AM uplifted by the sight
 Of London all bedecked at night
 With lamps that glow like living gems
 Along the high-built banks of Thames,
 While darkling roofs and domes and spires
 Float cloudy under heaven's faint fires.
 Each light, a glimmering column, swims
 Reflected in a flood that brims,
 And under glowering arches glide
 The stealthy barges on a tide
 Whose running music bears to me
 Its far-drawn impulse of the sea.

I watch the streaming people go
 Across the bridges to and fro,
 Whose every half-seen face doth mask
 Half-conscious purpose. What, I ask,
 The star-drawn tidal pulse that plays
 Mysterious in our mortal ways?

MICHAEL WILSON.



"I went out with the stove alight and pointed it at the stars."

CHANCE IT

By ERNEST GOODWIN

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

I WAS up at Liverpool when the railway strike broke out. Two big liners had come in from New York, one almost on top of the other, and all the hotels were packed. I was at one where quite a bunch of Americans put up. It is a long way from being the largest of the Liverpool hotels, and as a consequence we were thrown together familiarly, and in an informal way we were all acquaintances. Without bothering about each others' names, we most of us took an occasional drink together, or sat down at odd times for a smoke and a chat. Many of these men from the States—most of them, in fact—were leading business men. I

found myself rubbing shoulders with men who stood for dollars to an extent one never really believes, even when the figures are in the newspapers.

One night, in the smoking-room, a lot of us were crowded together. I was with half a dozen men, including one very distinguished-looking old boy whom we all called "Judge," and all of us enjoying the reminiscences of a man who was evidently a leading States actor or theatrical manager.

Near by was a larger group talking sport—the usual lies—and then I became aware of someone joining in the discussion. After I had caught the first word or two I listened

and looked the speaker over. He was a short, slender man, about thirty-five or forty, I should say, with blue eyes and thin fair hair, and a monotonous voice that, without being loud, carried well. As I gathered what he was talking about, I moved over towards his table. So did several other men. There was soon quite an interested crowd there.

"There is something of the sort," he was saying. "I haven't seen it, and it isn't where they told you, but one of my bearers told me a similar yarn, and I went after it and got pretty close to it, and I could have got it, but—well, I got hold of something else. In fact, if you don't think I'm butting in where I'm not wanted, I'd like to—well, gentlemen—this is what I got hold of." He undid his waistcoat. Underneath it he wore a kind of cardigan jacket with a pocket. From this he drew a rough piece of stone and held it in the palm of his hand. Most of it was just dull whitish-looking stone, but it had been cut on one face, and it glittered. I know little of stones in the rough, and I dare say I was as wise as most of them there, but a man standing near and listening, a short, immensely fat Jew, with a bull neck and an emperor's head, suddenly began to take notice. I had heard him addressed casually as Salamon.

He stared at the stone. "May I look?" he asked, and in the insolent way some men have, without waiting for permission, he coolly took the stone in his fingers and began turning it over and over.

The little man looked nervous. "Steady with that," he said, and seemed almost inclined to snatch it back. The Jew coolly went on turning the thing about, and then handed it back without a word. He had a cigar in his mouth which he had just been about to light. He forgot that, however, and stood chewing the unlighted cigar, with his eyes on the little man's face.

"That's some diamond," said the little man. There was a movement of interest among us which seemed to draw the cork out of him, as it were, for he began to tell us all about himself. His name was Shand. He was on his way to Scotland. He had been in Africa for fifteen years. There was something about a girl he'd left behind him, whom he was going to see again. He was no sort of speaker, but there was a queer something about him that held you. And then that diamond—most men want to know about diamonds in the rough, as big as a hen's egg, carried about in a waist-

coat pocket. Soon he got on to that part of his story.

"That animal you're talking of, it isn't at Shongweli—it's a lot further north and west, beyond M'langa's country. I don't think any white man's been there but me. There's hills in between, and a devil of a river that isn't marked on the maps, and no one knows where it comes out. And beyond that there's a marsh—ah, two hundred miles long, by what the niggers say, though it isn't more than twenty or so wide. I crossed it."

"Is that where this beast is?" asked someone.

"No. It's further north still. I started out to find it, but I turned back when I got this."

"Tell us," said someone else. Salamon, still chewing his unlighted cigar, was listening hard.

"I went alone, except for one bearer. I always do. My boy was the oldest nigger I ever saw—near a hundred, I guess, and as tough as oak. Knew every blessed African language, too—anyway, he could make out everything that was said to him.

"We got over that marsh I was telling you about. I was after that beast of yours, and I was prospecting for anything worth coming after—metals, trade stuff, anything. Those hills I told you of—there's oil there. I found the place where it drains out of the ground. There's a sort of marsh of oil. Everything's dead for miles round. It's soaking through the jungle there, killing all the growth as it spreads. The natives think there's a ju-ju there, and won't go within miles. I took a sample.

"Well, I went on, crossed this other marsh I've told you of, where there's a special kind of fly, worse than tsetse-tsetse, and when I struck good country on the other side I ran into trouble. I told you I only take one man with me. That's because I have my own way of getting on with the niggers. I don't want an army—I just talk to 'em, and I get on all right.

"But this time it looked bad. They rushed us at night and hauled us off to their village, and shoved us in a temple—a stinking hole with skulls hung all round it inside, and an idol of wood. One eye-socket was empty, so that he had only one eye. This is his eye." He broke off, twiddling the stone about again.

Salamon took it from him again, and had another long look till Shand held out his hand for it. The other went on chewing

his cigar and said never a word, but listened. You never saw a man listen as he did. He was listening all over.

"Well," went on Shand, "as always happens, there had to be any amount of talking before they could do what they proposed, which was to cut our throats before the idol and set our heads up to dry with the others; and my man, who had nerve enough for twenty, soon got talking. I don't know whether he got 'em frightened or interested, but, anyhow, it came to palavering between their priest, a filthy-looking maniac with an eye like a hawk, and me, my man translating.

"What do you think it came to? They wanted to know if I could cure their magic flame. There was a lot of talk about this magic flame, and at last it was shown us. It was a paraffin stove—one of those air-pump things.

"Up to then I thought I was the first white man who had happened along there, but it was plain now that I wasn't. And as I got their story I saw he must have been a lively boy. They'd got him the same as they had me, and he'd worked his 'magic' on them. He'd spun them a tale about being a god himself, and he'd promised them to throw a spell over everything so as to bring them bumper harvests for years. He just lit his stove and walked about with it, pointing it to the different stars, and pow-wow-ing, and after that all was to be top-hole. Well, they had their doubts, and though they treated him nicely they kept him well watched. As luck would have it, they had something like a record harvest—I bet he did a bit of praying while he was waiting for the mealies to grow that season—and that convinced them. They chopped off the head of their own priest and made this chap priest instead. The idol had two eyes then instead of one, and this beggar watched his time and got away with one."

"Why not two?" asked someone.

"Hadh't time, I guess. Supposing the eye he got was as tight as this one, it took him time, and I dare say, like me, he had to cut before daybreak. Anyhow, there was the one eye left.

"Well, it wasn't hard to see what I'd got to do to gain time.

"That oil I told you of, I'd taken a sample, and I used it. I found out that all their magic stove wanted was filling up—it had burnt out. So I insisted on being left alone in the temple, and I filled the stove, and you never saw such a crazy lot of niggers when

I went out with the stove alight. It was night. I'd worked the effect up. I kept them waiting from early morning while I put the 'fluence on their god, and there they sat in thousands, fasting—I made 'em. It impressed 'em all the more, and they just kept drumming now and then.

"When I went out with the stove alight and pointed it at the stars and chanted the alphabet over them, they shrieked like a lot of hyenas, and when I gave 'em permission to dance they went at it like mad.

"But that priest was no slouch. He wasn't going to be abdicated in my favour, and in no time he'd passed the word round that now the magic of the flame was restored, I was to expiate the other fellow's crime by being slaughtered before the altar. My boy protested, but it was no good, and we were both bound, and taken into the temple for the ceremony, and then the funniest thing happened you ever heard of.

"The priest was there in his holiest get-up—all feathers and grasses and the weirdest mask—and was fooling about with the stove just to show off. I don't know what the flash-point of the oil was, but the stove blew up—exploded right in the middle of our ceremony. He was all ablaze before you could say 'Knife!' and when the flames died out for want of anything else to burn, he was a sizzling heap—smelly.

"After that I was some god. I called for a week of fastings and repentances to get 'em all occupied, and I did all kinds of ceremonies over the stove, and one night I got the idol's eye out, set fire to the place, and lit out.

"I travelled, I tell you, but I made good, and so did my boy. I went on ahead and got to the marsh and waited there, and he turned up smiling a week later. We came back and crossed to Benin, and I had the stone valued."

The speaker drew a long breath. So did we.

"What's it worth?" asked someone.

"Fifteen thousand pounds," said Shand. Salamon spoke for the first time.

"I'll give you ten for it," he said.

Shand and he got talking. We others had drinks. They were still talking while we had that and another afterwards, and by that time they had come to the maddest arrangement.

Shand came over to me and apologised to the man I was with, and asked me if I was English. I said I was. Then he asked me if I'd see him through a little bit of

business—just tossing, he said. I asked him what for, and I'm blessed if it didn't turn out that he was going to toss Salamon for that diamond.

They'd been chowing it over in the corner, just those two, for half an hour, and Shand had agreed to toss him twenty thousand pounds or nothing for his jewel.

We sat aghast, and looked at him and one another and Salamon, who stood by as cool as you like, with a challenging look on his face, prepared, we could see, to quarrel like the inferno incarnate if anyone cared to take it up. He talked. His name was Salamon—anyone could inquire about him. He could put the money up, five times over, if necessary, and so on. No one liked him.

I just said to Shand: "Are you wise?"

"I think I am," he said, quite coolly. "I've got the feeling that my luck's in. It has been ever since I set eyes on that diamond. Everything's gone right with me. I've always taken chances, and I don't see why I shouldn't now. This gentleman here"—he waved his hand towards Salamon—"I dare say he's right when he says I shouldn't market the diamond for more than ten thousand, and even that may take a time, and I hate waiting about, and it's as fair for me as for him, so I'll toss. But I felt I'd like to see someone looking on, and I guessed you were English, and so am I, so—"

Just then the waiter—you know what ears these fellows have—said to me on the quiet: "Excuse me, sir, but we can't have anything of that sort down here. We should lose our licence if it got about." That was reasonable, so I asked Shand and the Jew if they'd come to my room; but in that case I said I should have to ask at least one or two others to come as well—I didn't care about being the only other man there. As it proved, there was no difficulty in getting someone else to come. In fact, most of them there showed pretty plainly that they wanted to see the thing through. So I said anyone there was welcome, and we went up to my room on the first floor.

The room was a bit crowded, and most of us, I fancy, were more than a little excited. I drew forward a small table, and towards this we all crowded.

There was an awkward moment or so. The absurd pettiness of the ceremony we were to witness, the mere tossing of a penny in the air twice, or at most three times, in order to settle the ownership of twenty

thousand pounds, was uppermost in all our minds.

Salamon produced a coin.

"You cry to me?" he inquired.

"Right. Sudden death?" said Shand.

"No," said Salamon, "best two out of three."

"What's the matter with sudden death?" asked Shand.

The other shook his head.

"Bit too quick, that's all. I don't fancy being struck by lightning, and that's what it will feel like, I reckon, to the one that loses. No"—in his insistent, overbearing way—"make it two out of three."

"All right," said Shand. Salamon drew up to the table one of the few chairs in the room, and placed his heavy body in it, resting his elbows on the table. Shand took a seat opposite. Even Salamon seemed in no hurry to toss. One or two men were breathing heavily, as, crowding round, they manœuvred for a clearer view. The diamond was on the table. Salamon laughed heartily. "Tell you what," he said, "we'd all be better for a peg. Can't get one, I suppose, guv'nor?" he asked me. I shook my head. "Well, all right, as we are."

He held the penny poised against his thumb nail, when I put up a hand.

"Just a minute."

He looked inquiry.

"Gentlemen," I said, "it occurs to me this isn't the sort of evening's entertainment one runs across every day, and since it's in my room I don't think I'm out of order if I make a suggestion."

I don't know if Salamon caught any hint of distrust in my voice, but he looked at me in none too friendly a fashion. I went on.

"We don't know each other, it's rather a big thing that's being handled, and since we're most of us business men, neither of these two gentlemen ought to take offence if I say that a—well, perhaps I'd better call it a supervising committee had better take charge."

"I'm not a swindler—I'm a sportsman," said Salamon unpleasantly, his heavy jaw thrust aggressively towards me.

"Quite so," I said. "No one's doubting it. But no man will object to having a thing like this put on a proper footing. I think an independent man, at least, ought to watch this—I mean a man with power to interfere and to settle disputes."

Salamon grew dark.

"Hang it!" he exclaimed. "What

chance of dispute is there? Here's two sportsmen tossing best two out of three. Never mind what for. If it's a dollar or a million, the principle's the same."

I looked at the others. Without their speaking I could see that they were with me.

"The principle's the same in all sport," I said firmly. "A judge to see fair. If you're going to toss in this room, let's arrange matters properly. You don't want any dispute if you win, do you?"

"I don't see——" he began. The gentleman we all called "judge" cut in sharply—

"What this gentleman says is quite right. For one thing, what about the coin?"

"Well, what about it?" asked Salamon insolently, tossing it on the table.

"Everything about it," said the "judge" coolly. "If I were tossing in this, I should want to draw a coin—out of a hat," he finished, after a moment's hesitation.

Salamon flung himself back impatiently in his chair.

"All right, draw a coin, if you like."

I got my hat, and a dozen of us dropped coins—in-cents, dollars, pennies—and I held it up. "Who'll draw?"

We all looked at each other. I glanced at the "judge."

"We most of us know you," I said. "I wonder if you'd draw a coin?"

He smiled good-humouredly.

"I don't mind. But what about the two gentlemen—do they agree?"

"I do," said Shand.

I held the hat over my head. The "judge" put his hand in and drew a coin, a penny, tossing it on the table.

"There you are," said he. Salamon went to pick it up. I dropped my hand on it.

"Not yet," I said. "We don't want it handled too much. Who's tossing? Who's crying?"

"Cry to me?" asked Salamon. Shand nodded coolly. Salamon looked at me.

"Turn up your cuffs," I said. He gave an exclamation of disgust.

"I don't know what sort of company you're used to," he said, "but they must be a pretty hot lot." I took no notice, and he stood up, drew off his coat and flung it dramatically on the carpet.

He then turned his shirt-cuffs back, baring his thick, hairy arms to the elbow.

"That do?" he sneered.

I turned to Shand.

"Now, Mr. Shand, are you satisfied?"

"Quite," said he.

Salamon picked up the penny. Sitting down in his chair again, he clapped his hand flat on the table with the penny underneath.

"Cry to that," he said.

I could not refrain from checking him again.

"Aren't you going to spin the coin?" I asked.

"What for?" asked Salamon. "There's only two sides to it, ain't there? And one's on top, under my hand, head or tail, and he can cry which he likes, and I'll lift my hand."

"But——" I commenced.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Salamon. He had a loud voice, full of the immense animal vigour which inspired his gross body in all its movements. He lifted his hand from the table, showing the penny underneath. "Think I'm juggling? I tell you I'm playing fair. I'm no chicken, but you make me sick, the way you keep foxing me. I tell you what"—he addressed himself to Shand—"I'll give you a game, if you've got any sport in you."

Shand never answered, but kept an inquiring eye on the other's face.

"There's the coin," said Salamon, picking it up from the table and holding it out. "Well, then"—he held it in the cup of his left hand with the fingers of his right, then slid his hand forward along the table, laying it flat as he did so, with the coin underneath—"you can cry now; and, what's more, I'll tell you what it is. It's a head."

"What do you mean?" asked Shand.

"What I say," said Salamon curtly. "I've placed the coin the way I choose. It's flat on the table. It's a head. Go on," he said jeeringly, as Shand sat bewildered. "Think I'm a liar? Head—head! Cry head, my lad, and win."

I think we all stared at each other. It took some few seconds or so before we saw Salamon's object. From being a matter of the chance spin of the coin, he had lifted the contest to the plane of psychology. Shand had to cry. Salamon had told him what to call. Was he telling the truth or not?

I watched Shand's face. He understood the position. He had to sum his opponent up. He sat staring into Salamon's face as if seeking to read his mind.

Several of us stooped down to examine the hand as it lay.

"Go on," he said coolly. "I don't



“ ‘Go on,’ he said coolly. ‘I don’t swindle,
and I don’t lie. Satisfied?’ ”

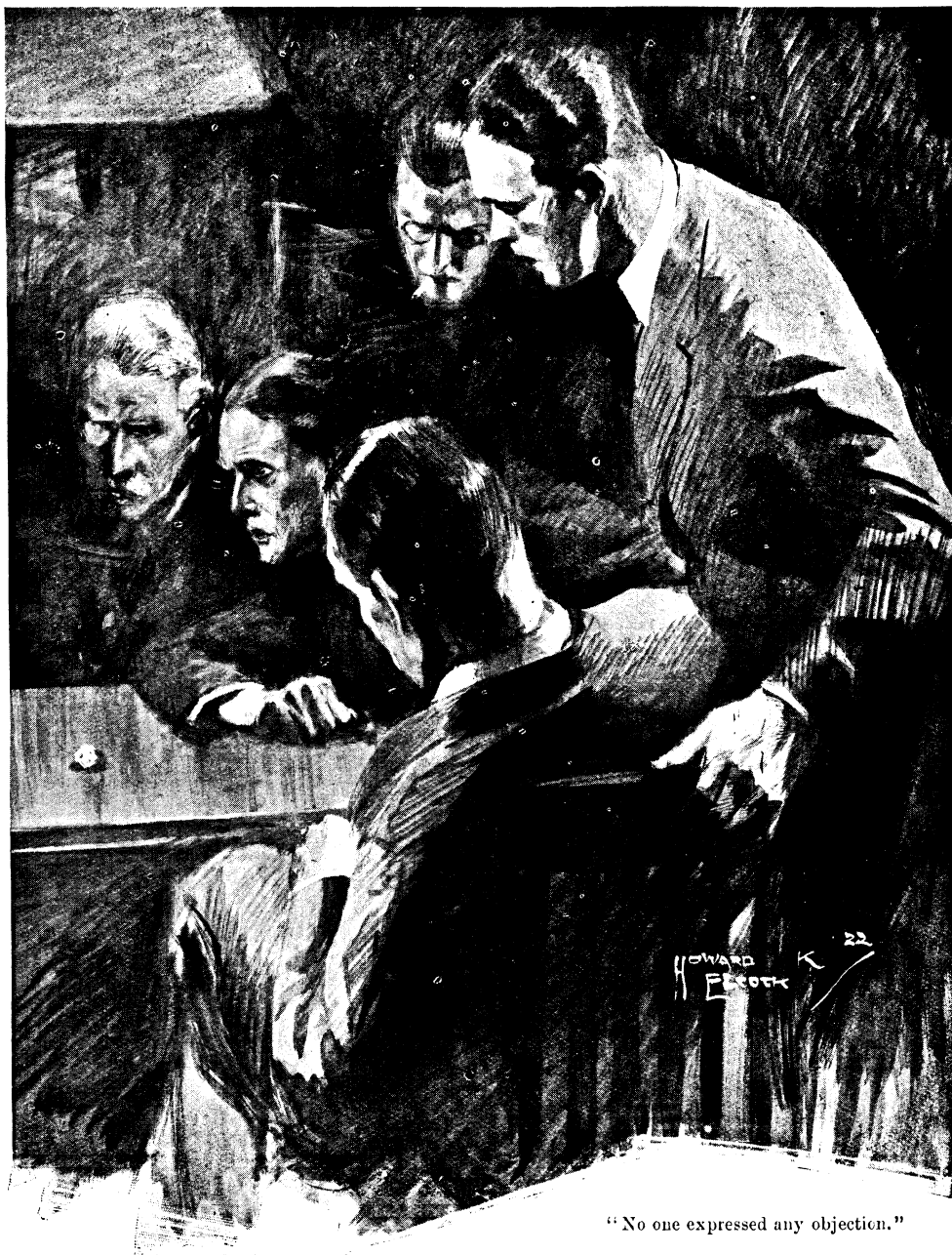
swindle, and I don’t lie. Satisfied?” No one expressed any objection. Indeed, it was perfectly apparent that the coin must be flat on the table, for the fingers and the palm of the hand were not even in contact with the table. The coin lay just under the ball of the thumb, and here and there the rim showed. “Well, then, I’ll satisfy our friend here. I told him I’d make it head.” He lifted his hand. “Squint at that.”

The head showed.

He dragged the coin back, slid it into his left hand again, and again pressed the hand forward on the table towards Shand.

“Call,” said Salamon, “call, and call head. Go on. I want you to win. It’s only twenty thousand pounds, and so we don’t mind if we lose, do we? Now, then, call head and win.”

For twenty seconds we all sat, tense and silent, watching Shand, watching Salamon. Shand stared at the hand. Then he made



"No one expressed any objection."

up his mind. With his eyes still fixed on the hand, "Head!" he said.

Salamon lifted his hand. The coin showed head.

We all breathed deep. Shand gave a gasp. Salamon merely laughed.

"Head it is," he said. "I told you it was head. Always believe what I tell you, and you'll do well. One to you. Now cry again, and mind you cry what I tell you, and you're in twenty thousand pounds." He

again cupped his left hand, and slid the coin into it, laid the hand flat on the table, and slid it over to the centre.

"Now, what's that? Wait—listen to me. It's a head. Understand? It's a head. Go on, say it. Cry head and win. You won the first because you did what I told you. Do it again. Go on, say head."

Shand sat bewildered. So was everyone there, I think. The big Jew, with his air of

triumph and magnificent confidence, seemed to dominate the whole room.

Shand said no word. Salamon went on.

"Head—head—head," he said persuasively. "Don't be puzzled, don't stop to think. Just say head." He seemed to be almost mesmerising us. "Head," he repeated. "Shall I tell you something? If we tossed from now till breakfast time, I promise to keep on putting it heads up. I want you to win—I want you to cry head. It's only twenty thousand pounds, and what's—"

"Tail!" said Shand sharply. Salamon turned his hand over. The coin showed head.

Shand slapped his thigh in annoyance.

"This is some going," said the man next to me.

Salamon chewed away at his unlighted cigar.

He kept his eyes on Shand's face, and again manipulated the coin in his hand. Again he slid the hand forward.

"Now," he said, "cry head, or get someone else to cry for you if you haven't got the nerve. But, for Heaven's sake, don't play the fool with your chance. I've told you it's a head. Say it. Say head. That's my last word."

He leant back in his chair. Shand looked rather helpless. We stared from the diamond, glittering in the very centre of the table, to Salamon's great freckled hand spread out close by. We were silent. I could hear somebody's watch ticking. Salamon sat absolutely still, unsmiling, his eye on Shand.

"Head," said Shand.

Salamon turned his hand over.

The coin showed tail.

Salamon put his hand on the diamond. He placed it carelessly in his waistcoat pocket, and stood up, eyeing Shand, eyeing all of us, with unmeasured contempt. "A pack of kids," he said arrogantly. With a natural, if unformed suspicion, the "judge" picked up the coin and looked at both sides. It was a fair coin. "Well?" jeered Salamon. No one said anything. "Well, good night all," he said, and left the room.

The thing that hit everybody most was the way Shand took it—just a momentary droop as he sat there. Then he got up, smiled, a little feebly, perhaps, said "Good night" as the victor had done, and was going out, when the "judge" spoke to him.

"That was bad luck, Mr. Shand," he said sympathetically.

Shand just gave a little sigh.

"Well," he said, "it's the old luck come back. I ought to have known it was fooling me. I don't mind the diamond. But"—his voice broke a little—"I was going up to Dumfries. I'd got a reply to a letter I'd written there. There's a girl there—well, she'll be getting on, like me, now. It's fifteen years now since I went out to make a home for her. I thought maybe she'd forgotten me, but—she's been waiting—and hoping—"

He went abruptly out of the room.

The "judge" spoke. There were fifteen men spectators with myself. They all understood, and he had need to say very little.

"This man Shand," he said, "he's—well, he's any kind of a fool you like, and I dare say he deserves all the bad luck that's going. But it's a case, isn't it, of giving the poor devil a leg-up? He carries it off well enough; but he's going to have a pretty bad time for many a year when he thinks of the ass he's made of himself to-night. Let's give him his passage back to the Cape again, and a dollar or two over." He put down ten ten-dollar bills himself, and we all contributed, some quite handsomely.

The "judge" and I waited about near the desk in the hall next morning, and when Shand came down with his bag and settled his bill, we took him aside, handed the collection over, and had a few words with him. He said little, but he smiled gratefully.

I left Liverpool that morning for Manchester. The state of the railway service just then was pitiable. We were nearly ten minutes late in starting, and immediately after the start we were held stationary for some time.

I had a compartment to myself in a corridor car. In the next compartment I could gather—I am particularly sharp of hearing—that there were at least two men. They were talking. Something seemed familiar in the voices that reached me. Surely that was the voice of the little man Shand? And that other, louder, assertive, was not that—Yes! Oh, impossible!

I listened. I admit it. I played the eavesdropper, sitting with my head thrust well out into the corridor, my ears straining to catch what was being said.

"How much?" said the louder voice.

The other voice—I could swear it was Shand's—answered: "I don't quite know how the dollar and the pound stand

to-day, but it's between three hundred and three-fifty quid. Not bad."

"What about the 'judge'?" queried the loud voice.

"He landed a couple of pocket-books, one with a good wad—three thousand in hundred-dollar bills. He's sent 'em on to himself in London by registered parcel post, and he's gone down to meet 'em. Now, where are we for?"

"You get on to Bradford"—I could swear by now to that voice—"but I shall have a day or two in Manchester. Jimmy's wired me that he's located a guy I made up my mind to skin in London last year, but I missed him. Don't want to miss him this time, particularly as Jimmy says he's quite easy, and full of cotton profits."

"Could we work this again?" asked the high-pitched, hesitating voice.

"No." The voice was aggressive, full of combat. "Worst of this picturesque sort of stunt is that it leads to so much talk. It's done very well, but now cut it out for good."

"I don't know," came the other voice.

"It seems to me——"

The harsh voice cut in, arrogant as on the night before—

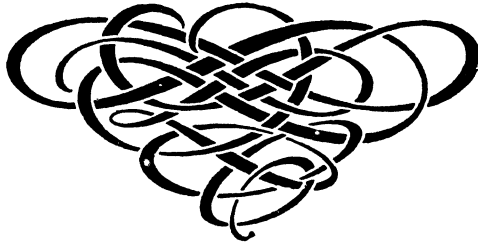
"Who leads this bunch?"

"You," came the reply, a trifle depressed.

"Then what I say goes."

I rose. I stepped quietly out into the corridor. I gave a peep into the next compartment.

Its two occupants were Shand and Salamon.



SONG.

IN Love is so great gladness,
Who'd tarry to possess
His heart of such sweet madness
For any quietness?
In friendship is quaint kindness
Where ease can have its fill;
But Love, with all its blindness,
Is kinder, kinder still.

In Love is so great pleasure,
Who'd hesitate to pray
For Love in richest measure,
Or cast the gift away?
Who fears an after-sadness
He fears the stars above;
In Love is so great gladness,
Who would not ask for Love?

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.

THE WAYFARER

By BERNARD HOUGHTON

ILLUSTRATED BY WARWICK REYNOLDS

THE sun had vanished from a cloudless sky, and the horizon still held that steely clear-cut outline which, on the East Coast, usually betokens wind. Over the sea a full moon hung like a golden lantern; silence lay heavy all round, save where distant bleatings told of the folding of the ewes which had been pasturing all day in the marshes.

It was about ten o'clock before the wind came. For some time before there had been an expectancy in the air, a sense of preparation, as if Nature were buttoning her great-coat up to the chin. A vagrant air shook the leafless boughs of the stunted trees on the foreshore as if in anticipation. Then from far out at sea came a deep humming, like the bourdon of a mighty organ. It swelled louder and louder, and then, with a leap, the wind arrived.

In an instant the silence had vanished, torn to ribbons. Trees rustled, gates and fences creaked, the old deserted windmill groaned in every timber. For the moment the deep organ note had disappeared, and everything, from the ivy clinging round the old pollard to the waves now pounding in foam on the shore, protested against this unwarranted attack. Then bit by bit, as though they bowed to the inevitable, the sense of flurry passed, Nature righted herself once more, and the organ note was again distinguishable as the wind came in a steady pulsating flood from the north-east.

Far out over the sea, and at so great a height that even in daylight the water could scarcely have been visible, there travelled what at first glance looked like a collection of brown leaves. Their speed was immense, almost beyond comprehension. There is no other living creature in earth, air, or sea capable of a speed of from one hundred and twenty-five to one hundred and fifty miles per hour, which was the pace at which these birds were travelling, even with a following wind. Had they been visible, they would have appeared to be drifting along faster

than any cloud, and with the same steady line of flight.

Suddenly, as if moved by a simultaneous desire to find out where they were, the flock descended towards the sea in a series of long slants. It now assumed roughly the shape of a triangle with the apex foremost. At the point of the apex, and slightly in advance of the others, flew a bird who appeared to be the leader; at any rate, he conducted the aerial manoeuvres which brought them down to a level whence they could see the white line of breakers on the shore and the broad winking glare of a lighthouse.

The flock had slowed down somewhat, but was still flying faster than the fastest express train; the great eye of the lighthouse appeared to spring at them, and from the tail of his eye the leader had a momentary glimpse of the pitiful little impact of two or three small bodies against the stout glass of the lantern. Then there was dry land beneath them; the flock flew low over a field, startling with the rush of their wings the sheep huddled in a corner. A couple of dizzy wheeling evolutions, and they landed out of the wind in the lee of a thick hedge. Once on the ground they did not stir again, but were instantly asleep. The first "cock" had arrived.

With the earliest streak of dawn the birds were on the move. But now they had ceased to be a flock. That wonderful instinct which had caused them to collect together far away to the north-east, and had borne them across the ocean in company, now told them that each must look out for himself. So singly, or in twos and threes, the little brown bodies slipped over the hedge, were caught in the turmoil of the upper air, and vanished like leaves down wind.

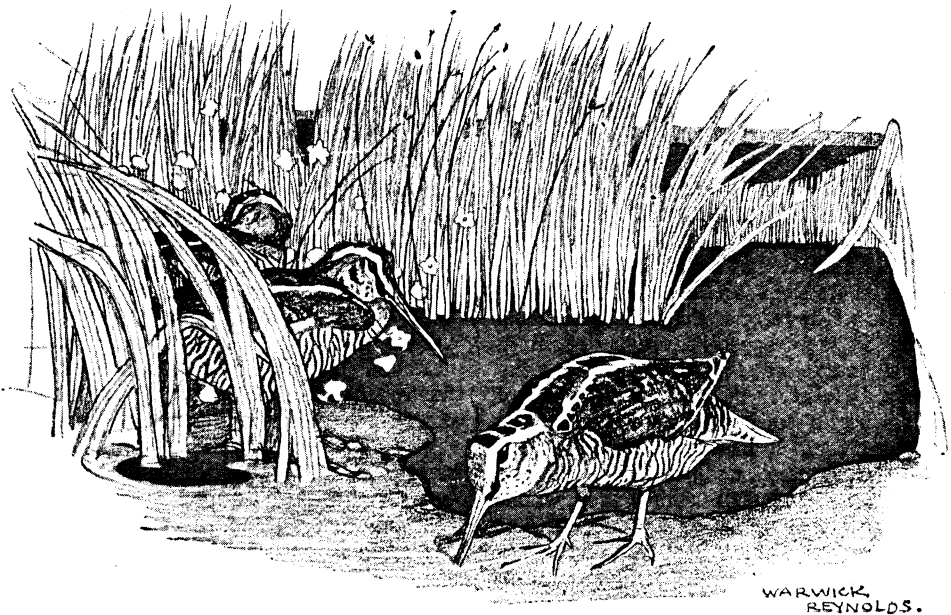
Finally only the leader of the erstwhile flock remained. And he suddenly felt lonely and strange. He had been born near this spot the previous year, but it was instinct

and not memory which had brought him back, and he recognised none of his surroundings.

With his head drawn close into his body, and his long bill resting on his breast, he remained for a short while where he had slept, as though he were working out a plan of campaign. So closely did he resemble in colour the brown earth which showed through the scanty herbage covering the tussock against which he lay, that one might have passed within a yard of him without noticing him, unless one's attention had been attracted by his dark little beady eye gazing unwinkingly ahead.

two-legged creatures tapping trees in a covert, and of others who, when he flew near them, greeted him with a great noise and the deadly whistling of invisible things in the air around him. So he obeyed his instinct, and, although he was still hungry, flipped once more round an intervening bush and vanished inland.

As it so happened, he need not have worried, for the boy was the son of the game-keeper, and he knew better than to meddle with any game. Half an hour later, over his porridge, he was telling his father, "The 'cock came in with the wind last night; I saw one in the pasture this morning."



"He dabbled his long, tender bill in the ooze and partook of breakfast."

Presently, having evidently come to a decision, he flipped over the hedge into the teeth of the wind, and, fighting against it until he had made sufficient headway, allowed himself to be drifted at an angle which landed him on the edge of the marsh, where, after a short toilet of ruffled feathers, he dabbled his long tender bill in the ooze and partook of breakfast.

While he was thus engaged, a couple of cows passed by. Although their feet squelched perilously near him in the mud, he was not disturbed; but when behind the cows a whistling boy hove in sight, instinct and memory told him to beware. He had at once a faint recollection of such

After his abrupt departure from the marsh the woodcock was seized with a feeling that everything was very bare and desolate. The wind bothered him, and he felt the need of sheltering tree-trunks; the sky seemed very big and empty and full of possible dangers, and he wanted the protection of branches overhead. So he made straight for a line of trees which showed on the slope of a hill, and vanished into their soft shadows, to the infinite disgust of a hawk who, rocking to and fro in the air, had had his eye on him from the time that he had begun his breakfast in the marsh.

Once inside the belt of trees, the woodcock felt very much the same relief as a man

experiences when he leaves a crowded city street and slips into some old church. The wind hardly penetrated here. All around him was a grateful silence, and a sense of security afforded by the trunks and boughs of the trees. After a minute or two to take his bearings, he started to explore.

It was just the sort of covert that 'cock love. There was little or no dense undergrowth, clumps of evergreens were scattered here and there, and there was a thick carpet of leaves underfoot. The covert was crossed by two or three rides, and through the centre of it ran a tiny rill, its banks emerald green with moss. Further investigation revealed an alder swamp adjoining one edge of the covert, which meant a supply of food close at hand—a fact that appealed mightily to our friend, who belonged to a species of bird that dislikes feeding away from home.

Several other woodcock had decided to take up their abode in this covert, and there was considerable bustle and excitement before they all got settled. This business involved much flying up and down the rides, dodging in and out of bushes, finding suitable exits to the alder swamp, and practising passing at full speed through openings between boughs so small that no pursuing foe could follow. When the shades of evening began to fall, they adjourned to the alder swamp to feed. Then they retired for the night, and next morning entered upon the daily routine which they would follow until they took flight once more.

For some time our friend was content to live the life of the covert. He was a more than usually wily bird, which was probably the reason that he had taken command of the migrant flock. He was bolder, too, than his companions, and more than once narrowly escaped with his life as a result of his temerity.

On one occasion he had forsaken the alder swamp and, greatly daring, patronised the marsh on the sea-shore. Here he discovered a most delightful water vegetable that appealed greatly to his palate. After this the food in the alder swamp seemed tasteless and uninteresting, and he got more and more into the habit of slipping over to the marsh in the early morning to revel in the tasty herb.

But one morning, as he started on his homeward flight, he was suddenly aware of a most terrible and immediate danger behind him. He wheeled desperately to

the left, and saw an enormous winged monster pursuing him so closely that he seemed to be sitting on his tail. Then began a series of the most astonishing twists and turns, the 'cock's one endeavour being to bear in the direction of the covert, while his pursuer tried to turn him back into the open. Here and there, to and fro, they wheeled and swerved, the 'cock ever rising higher in the air in his attempt to keep above his enemy, and gradually working towards the covert. At last, when he was almost exhausted, the foe made a swoop and, missing his prey, dropped down below him. Like a flash the 'cock made for home in one long slant; the friendly trees rushed up to meet him. Turning on his side, he darted in through a microscopic opening, hearing behind him a sound as of tearing linen as the hawk, braking frantically with every wing feather, swung off at an angle, and went hunting sulkily down the spinney side.

It so happened that this particular covert was not shot that year—the owner was abroad, and the shooting was unlet—so the birds passed a more or less uneventful time. They heard with a certain amount of uneasiness the occasional "pop-pop" from the neighbouring estate, and were at times annoyed by the abrupt arrival of some flurried fugitive who slipped suddenly into covert and vanished into the thickest bush. And once a magnificent cock-pheasant came sailing in, with a horrible red blotch on its breast feathers, and perched on a bough, half supported by the tree-trunk. As night fell there sounded on the leaves below a steady "drip-drip." The woodcock listened in horror, till, towards morning, a heavy thud told him that the long hours of pain and torment were over.

After his escape from the hawk, the woodcock was content to keep near home. He had noticed that his companions were very busy about some affair which necessitated a great deal of flying up and down with bits of grass, horse-hair, and wool. He had also noticed that he seemed to be an object of great interest to a small bird of his own kind; she had been in the habit of turning up where he was, and of making slight advances to him. To begin with, he had treated her with contempt; but now he began to feel that he, too, should take his share of the busy life of the covert, and very soon they joined the other couples flying to and fro.

WARWICK
REYNOLDS



"At last, when he was almost exhausted, the foe made a swoop. . . . Like a flash the 'cock made for home in one long slant."

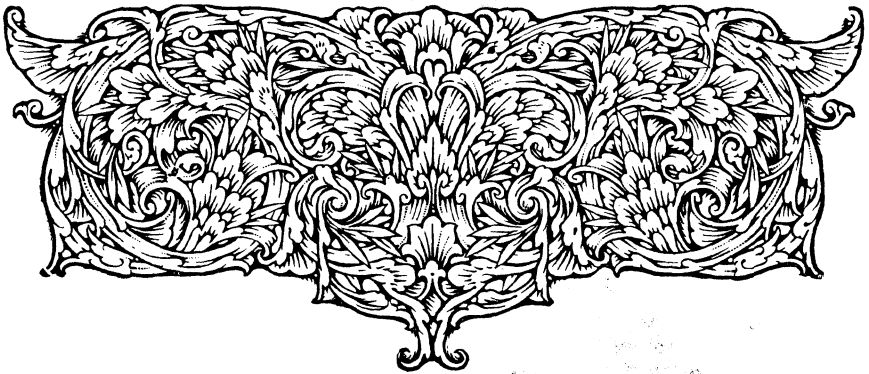
A little later his mate was sitting snugly on her eggs, and each night and morning he would take long silent flights up and down the ride which passed close to the nest, his neck feathers all ruffed out, and his long bill pointing to the ground. Later still, when the nest contained infants who required constant feeding, he took his share of duty, and brought immense quantities of food from the swamp to satisfy their appetites.

So the time passed, till, with the rising sap and the lengthening days, a sudden restlessness seized the woodcock. He began to take long flights round the covert, and even to venture further afield than he had done since his encounter with the hawk. Although he knew it not, the time was coming when, moved by an irresistible impulse, he would join again with a flock of his comrades and, rising high before a following wind, would fly all night over the sea, till beneath the rising sun he saw the bold shore and craggy inlets of another land.

But the fate that governs the destinies of little birds had decreed that he should see that land no more. One morning, when his restlessness had grown almost overpowering, he betook himself to the marsh, thinking

that possibly, if he could once again partake of that succulent food, he might ease this intolerable unrest. He dabbled his bill in the cool ooze and ate to his heart's content. Then, feeling much better, and with a sharp eye above him in case of danger, he started back to covert.

Possibly the absence of shooting that year had dulled his senses and given him a sense of false security. At any rate, sharp as his eyes were, they did not notice a form crouching behind the hedge. As he rose, he saw the sun twinkling from a gun-barrel, and made one desperate swerve to the right and upwards, but it was too late. There came the roar, and the singing through the air around him of countless invisible gnats; a second roar, and a red streak of biting, grinding pain. He felt himself falling, recovered himself by a frantic effort, felt himself falling again, made another effort, but this time in vain. He heard the air in his ears like the deep organ note of the wind, and had a momentary remembrance of a flock of birds flying at speed far above the wrinkled ocean. And then light and life and movement vanished, and it was only a little mop of bloodstained feathers that fell to the ground.



UNCLE GEORGE

By FREDERICK WATSON

ILLUSTRATED BY G. D. ARMOUR

IT was the day hounds found in Cobbler's Spinney and hunted like smoke right through Eastern Meadows to the gorse fells of Upper Glebe. There scent for some odd reason failed—even old Monarch could not pick it up—and then, as George Pembroke tightened his girths and lit a cigarette, a fresh fox broke from covert, and the horn rang its clear melodious note of "Gone away." Now, Challenger was not the kind of horse to be left standing, and by the time Pembroke was in the saddle, the field had got the better of five hundred yards. There was nothing in that. What did matter was that Clara Marriott, only daughter of Sir John Marriott, the Master, a man as wealthy as he was sound, was skimming along behind old Colonel Villiers and taking the fellow's lead. Now, as Pembroke would have been the first to admit, the Colonel was a good sportsman and he could ride, but he had not a glimmer of an eye for a country. If he cleared a brook he had not anticipated—then he cleared it. On the other hand, he frequently did not. And it was just like Clara to trust his silver hairs and blazing, jolly old face. After all, she had but lately come back from school abroad, and was not cynical about hunting colonels—only full of distant admiration and faith for all elderly gentlemen.

To George Pembroke, aged thirty, and farming the small property of Heston Hall by the gentle process of buying dear and selling cheap—which is the secret of British agriculture—the presence of Clara Marriott had become increasingly disturbing. He had met her first at the Hunt Ball in January, and danced at least once, but it seemed rather more to him afterwards. Then she came to the meet next day and hunted, too, which does not always occur after hunt balls. There was a moment's conversation in the County Bank, where all the best people have an overdraft. Also he had motored over in his two-seater one evening to dine with them at their house,

and sat next to her. In a word, George Pembroke, being a solitary and serious young man, but poorly off, was rather upset. There were two quite dissimilar reasons for his discomfiture. He was palpably in love with Clara Marriott. On the other hand, she was surrounded with abundance, and an only daughter, while he was a one-horse man, and another year like the last would prove him not even that. Haunted by these melancholy reflections, which, after all, only meant that he had not proceeded far enough in the orthodox direction, George Pembroke said what he thought of Challenger, and, thrusting through second horsemen, children on Shetland ponies, young ladies with grooms, dowagers on puncheons, anxious but reticent members on anxious but impulsive thoroughbreds, members who were satisfied the hedge was the better line, and members who got off at the gate to make sure if the other members were right—passing all these in Challenger's immense striding canter, Pembroke flew a ditch, crossed the Marden Brook, and took a line below a patch of woodland where hounds were streaming southwards. He had cut off a good half-mile of heavy going, and, reining in, waited by the open heath to see the fox float like a ball of thistledown over the barren sombre landscape. Many a time he had seen it happen before, and those others—the ones who really came to ride and not to pray Heaven hounds would not find, or only on a rotten scent—those others went year after year the same old way across the plough over the pasture and into Bleach Wood, where it was evens on a sprain or a downright cropper. From where he stood he could see the Colonel on his hard-mouthed grey gelding, a sixteen-stone Christian on a sixteen-hand horse, his topper rammed down, his black coat arched, his breeches still spotless, his boots still twinkling. And behind him, riding like an angel, light as a pound of swan's feathers, sitting erect (but no silly nonsense of

astride), with her fair hair tucked neatly beneath her bowler, rode Clara Marriott on her light 14.3 chestnut Rip Rap by Gauntlet out of Whispering.

Challenger clinked his bit and stood trembling, his ears glued forward, his eyes steadfast on running hounds, and every time the horn sang his heart leapt, and once he moved, just to make sure (considering what any fool could see for himself) that his master still retained control of his faculties.

And he had some call for anxiety. For George Pembroke for the first time did not see the fox cross the ditch by the roots of the venerable oak where foxes have crossed for generation after generation, nor old Monarch and Steadfast, with their feathery sterns, bursting through the dead fronds of bracken, nor Peters, the huntsman, taking the brook fifty yards up—he saw none of all this which happened just as it had happened on days of rain and days of cold sunshine time and again before, but watched only the Colonel giving his infernal lead, and Clara Marriott exemplifying most of the Christian virtues in his wake. For a time they passed out of his vision, and then, with a crash, the Colonel drove through the thick thorn hedge and missed the lip of the brook by a matter of inches. That did not signify. The British Army had no further thought for that gallant officer except if he desired it, and he had expressed no special craving on record for a military funeral, with a gun-carriage free of cost. The Colonel knew it. He counted life cheap if he could, upon his old charger Romulus, risk a toss at something the young bloods down from Pall Mall thought twice about. That was all very well, but he was giving a lead to Clara, and he did not realise it. Nor was he the kind of old sportsman to rein in and ask the person at his tail: "Are you, madam, putting absolute faith on me? Because, if you are—desist."

And so he nipped over, pushed on, and was, so far as this episode is concerned, seen no more. (The fact that he mistook a hedge into a lane for a hedge into plough has nothing to do with us, though it was mentioned sympathetically in the current issue of the local paper.)

What really happened—by which is meant what really mattered—is that before Pembroke's horrified gaze the chestnut came short through the dense hedge, missed the bank by a yard, floundered on its nose in the stream, turned over, and was wedged

in the narrow bed of the running stream. Throwing himself off Challenger, Pembroke rushed forward. The girl was tied half in and half out of the water, her head by her horse's right ear. He scrambled down and, with a word of assurance, wedged his back upon her side of the bank and levered the horse's shoulder to relieve the pressure on her.

"How's that?" he asked.

She smiled faintly.

"Better," she said. "I'm all right. Don't wait for me. I think I can wriggle up."

George Pembroke's great drawback was his entire absence of speech in the more general encounters of life. So when he said, "Don't be silly," he achieved something like a social triumph.

"I'm afraid I daren't attempt to move your horse," he went on. "You see, if he was allowed to kick, he'd play old Harry, and yet, without moving the horse, I can't release you. Just take a nip of this, and then I'll tell you what I'm going to do."

The spirits brought the colour back to her cheeks.

"Now, look here. The horse is lying on a slant, and he's not a big 'un, anyhow. I'm going to get under him on this side, and as I rise and he turns, you must put your arms round my neck. I'll scramble backwards, and if he doesn't roll back and let us have one, we'll be after them in two shakes. Ready?"

"No. Mr. Pembroke, this isn't safe. You may be injured."

"My dear child," he retorted, "I'd rather be warmed up by a kick than sit here in this bally water. And, besides——"

"Well?"

"Oh, well, besides. Are you ready? Then here goes!"

He put his fourteen stone plus the leverage of the bank, plus the slope of the river-bed, and the horse began to turn, to roll slowly over, and her cold hands came round his neck and then her arms.

"Hold!" he gasped. "Now!" And as the chestnut kicked wildly upwards, and then scrambled to his feet, Pembroke crawled out of his reach and lifted Clara Marriott on to the solid earth again. And at that moment back came the Master with a pinched look, and at the tail of his horse old Peters, the huntsman, and pulled up beside them.

"Is she hurt, Pembroke?"

"No, sir, only wet."

"I suppose I have to thank you, eh?"

"Not have to."

"But I'm jolly well going to, my boy, don't you forget it. There's the motor, thank goodness, on the road! Better be off home, Clara, and, Pembroke, we want you to come to dinner."

Suddenly the old shyness came back, the sense that some things are not quite cricket, though an old-fashioned idea, no doubt, and he pleaded an engagement. He thought the Master seemed a trifle surprised, but what went to his heart was the expression upon Clara Marriott's face—a look that even he knew to be as good as an appeal.

He caught Challenger and, crawling stiffly into the saddle, went back to his lonely living-room in Heston Hall.

On the table was a letter. It simply stated that his Uncle George (the favourite Pembroke name), from Australia, was due to reach England almost at once, and was going to the Marriotts', with whose family his firm had the closest business relations.

"Well, I'm dashed!" said Pembroke. "To think that rich old boy is not merely coming here, but actually staying in their house! It sounds like a newspaper serial."

Considerably disturbed, he ate his dinner, drank a couple of glasses of port, and puffed at his pipe before the fire. The fact of the matter was, his Uncle George being a very mythical person indeed might be rather disconcerting. Or, on the other hand, there might be good in it. For were Uncle George really so very close with Sir John, then it might be thrown out over the nuts that, however uncertain the present state of farming might be, there was every hope, and so forth. It might come comparatively easy to his Uncle George to say things that would have perished for shame on his own lips. In any case, he could not, as a nephew, allow his uncle to stay within a mile of his house and not write a word of welcome. Nor could he be expected to refrain from mentioning that he knew the Marriotts. But, considering how impossible the future had become for anyone of his peculiar reticence, would not it be within the bounds of propriety. . . . Surely it would. And suddenly he recalled his dear old Guv'nor's words long ago: "If you are ever in trouble, George, go to your uncle." He permitted himself another glass of port, and, warmed with hope and the courage that allows the most bashful of men to pen a letter, he sat down and, with a pensive expression, wrote—

MY DEAR UNCLE,

I hope the long voyage has not overtired you. I thought it remarkably plucky of you to set out for England at your age. I admit I am a little hurt that you should be staying at the Marriotts' instead of with me, but they are, as of course you know better than I, most charming people. I hardly like to mention what I would never have the nerve to say to anyone face to face, but when you see Miss Marriott you will understand. I am a silly ass, I know, but, supposing conversation happened to turn on me, do you think you could say a word? I hate to be so beastly personal.

Your affectionate Nephew

GEORGE.

A letter came in reply a day later. It was written in a generous, rather scrawly hand.

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

Thank you for your nice letter. Yes, I bore the voyage over very well indeed, considering everything, but it is wonderful what I can do at my age. I must tell you of some of the things some day. I often sit thinking of you—quite the grown boy nowadays, I suppose—and a tear settles in my eye when I recall the days that will, I am afraid, never come back. Ah, well!

Now about little Clara. I know you will allow your uncle to speak of her in a grandfatherly way. I fell in love with her at first sight. She was what I believe you modern young men call IT, and I look forward to many a little quiet chat before I leave.

Rest assured I will not lose a moment in mentioning you. Only keep away, dear boy, keep away, because these affairs are very delicate, and the ground needs preparing. Much better for all concerned if you stay quietly at home. Also—but I beg of you keep calm—there is a youngster here whose behaviour towards her I hardly care about. I may be old-fashioned—I probably am—but I have my own views on such matters, and I'll stick to them, and do you follow in my steps.

I don't know your age, dear lad, but I enclose a Treasury note for cigarettes.

Your affectionate Uncle

GEORGE.

He smiled a good deal over that letter, which, in its strange mixture of high spirits and pomposity, struck him as rather charming. What he didn't appreciate was the reference to the young cub who was



"The chestnut missed the bank by a yard, floundered on its nose in the stream, turned over, and was wedged out of the water, her head

acting in an offensive way towards Clara Marriott.

Yes, if he had his way, he would very soon finish that sort of nonsense. But there, again, Uncle George had begged him not to call on the Marriotts just yet.

MY DEAR UNCLE (he wrote),

How very good of you to send me such a handsome present! As a matter of fact, I'm thirty. It is good of you to do what you

can. Will you dine with me after hunting to-morrow? I'll look out for you at the meet. Wrap up well.

Your affectionate Nephew
GEORGE.

The reply was brief and sent over by a groom the following morning:—

MY DEAR NEPHEW,

I was shocked to see that, after all I had hinted, you actually propose to hunt



in the narrow bed of the running stream. . . . Pembroke rushed forward. The girl was tied half in and half by her horse's right ear."

to-morrow. I do not refer to the obvious dangers that form, I am sure, an essential of such an intrepid "sport," if one can call the pursuit of a defenceless fox by such a name. What I deplore is your evident addiction to the habit. I am more disturbed than I can say. I may be eccentric—I may be old—but I am frank, and I tell you candidly if I see you out riding amongst those ferocious dogs, and bent upon the life of an animal that has never caused you a

moment's pain or regret, I will not merely abandon your case with little Clara, but cut you off with a shilling.

Your Uncle

GEORGE.

P.S.—I regret I cannot dine, as I leave to-day for Cambridge. Do not think I am embittered. I simply await the satisfaction of not seeing you at some future date.

That was all, but it made him feel very

depressed. He had particularly looked forward to that meet and its prospect of a chance of a word with Clara Marriott. But it would, of course, be the act of an irresponsible imbecile further to infuriate his astonishing Uncle George by turning out. The only course was to remain at home and do the hen-houses, a necessary but unromantic job.

He sat down and, with a certain irritation, wrote—

MY DEAR UNCLE,

I had no idea you were not in sympathy with hunting. As a matter of fact, the odds are on the fox every time. However, I have no desire to hurt your feelings, nor least of all to lose your support. I take it your visit to Cambridge is only a short one, and that you will stay here very soon.

Your affectionate Nephew

GEORGE.

This the groom pocketed, with two shillings, and trotted indifferently away.

It was about an hour afterwards that two things happened, neither on the surface either dramatic or critical alone, but together full of drama and episode. First, various persons began to pass to the meet, which was at Hangman's Copse, a serenely beautiful spinney, with a pale blue sky glinting through quiet winter trees and copper undergrowth, where rills of water went chuckling under cold sunlight across grey and silver pebbles. It was heart-breaking for George Pembroke to stand in his garden and nod to them, and tell the Colonel (recovered from partial concussion) that Challenger (of all unlikely falsehoods) was coughing, to assure Miss Alison, the Rector's daughter, that Challenger was dead lame, and finally, having grown wearied of Challenger, to inform the vet., pushing past on a half-broken four-year-old bay, that, owing to a sprained ankle, he could not pull on his boots.

He stared, in between times, at the occupants of various motors, and shouted new lies of varied disability. He took latterly a kind of dreary pleasure in having fallen a victim to diseases with which he had never been even on nodding terms. In one of the carriages, driven by the Marriotts' groom, he saw an elderly man with an obviously colonial face, but before he could reach the gate, it was gone, carrying, without any reasonable doubt, his

Uncle George. Then coming at an amiable trot past was Clara Marriott, and by her near side a young man in a top hat and black coat, a small, rather stout and reddish young man with a roving blue eye.

It struck him that Clara Marriott hesitated an instant, but something—that undesirable youth, probably—made him turn moodily aside, and they went on. He looked cautiously after them over the hedge, and saw her half turn her head, at which the young man turned completely and stared at him in a way that was little short of an insult. Very strange—in fact, rather impossible—things being as they were.

At the same moment the postman put a letter into his hand. It was from his mother.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

How I can have been so silly I really can't explain, because I simply have no idea, but, to my astonishment, it isn't your Uncle George who has landed, but your nephew George, a boy sent over to go to Cambridge. I sometimes think if we hadn't such a tradition for George as a Christian name, these . . .

That was as far as Pembroke got, because he was already running towards the house for his hunting kit, and shouting at the top of his voice for Hodges, the man-of-all-work, to saddle Challenger.

II.

THAT was the historic day hounds found in Bostock's pheasant coverts and ran without a check to Wimples Lakes—a five-mile point across a roaring country. A stiff hedge, with a six-foot ditch on the other side, halted quite a number of persons who, by reasons of preference, motive, age, intuition, imagination, or the honest reluctance of both themselves and their horses, were convinced that the best, if not actually the shortest, route lay in a hearty gallop to the gate, which, opening as it did upon the king's highway, was at the service of all good citizens in such moments of crisis. This party, including the Dowager Lady Crabbe on her ancient carriage horse; the young Bitterlings on their ponies; the Rector on his winded grey; Miss Cluttermole, who looked perfectly charming, on her half-bred roan; Captain Spenders, who rode in pink, and whose simple trust in his sixteen-hand black to refuse, despite every symptom of broken-hearted zeal, was a lesson

to everyone; the vet., whose four-year-old would have liked it, but was for sale, not for show; the ladies from the riding school at Bath, shepherded by the riding master from those ills and perils that afflict the innocent; second horsemen, grooms on youngsters and grooms on oldsters—this cavalcade pelted on to the road, and, led by the gallant Captain, who was quite evidently now set on glory, they bumped and clattered, jogged and cantered with the utmost excitement in the direction hounds might go, provided they happened to do so.

Of the contingent who followed hounds so far as good fortune and a sound landing will allow, the Colonel drove through hedge and over timber with accustomed noise and energy; on his left, with quiet springing grace, Sir John flew rails and cocked a rearward eye on Clara, who came with young George Pembroke on their Rupert, a five-year-old with the heart of a thruster, but no technique to speak of. It crossed his mind, as they both came clear behind him, that the run would do Rupert a world of good, and that should any little indiscretion happen—as it had happened last time out—nothing steadied a horse inclined to rush his fences more than a real smasher over a gate with no bones broken. It was, mused Sir John, who had no particular liking for the young man, a tonic for both man and horse. It meant experience. It was a lesson in tact.

He quickened Prince, his aged hunter, at an open ditch with a broken shelving bank, cleared it by a foot of solid clay, and again cocked over his shoulder his keen appraising eye. It had just crossed his mind that Pembroke wasn't out. He wondered why. He happened to know he was not ill, and he also happened to know (as fathers of only daughters without a mother are very apt) something more. But Pembroke was difficult. He thought he had a shrewd idea of the reason for his abrupt refusal to come back the other day. He knew pride when he met it, and he also knew a sound man when he ran up against him. It made him a little worried, especially with that youngster banging about.

It was at that moment that he saw crossing the field behind them Pembroke himself, approaching at steeplechase speed. Reining in to allow his daughter to catch up, he shouted: "Clara, look at Pembroke! Has Challenger got away with him?"

She pulled up and stared back. On he came until he was hidden by the dip before the last jump, and Sir John, with a puzzled

expression, said to the young man: "I say, what's come to your Uncle George?"

But young George had gone. He was already on his way. He was not hanging about just then. As Challenger flung into sight and, landing, came driving on, young George put Rupert at the brook and, scrambling out on the far side, waved a kindly hand and went off like steam.

"I say, Pembroke!" called out Sir John.

"Later—later," he answered, steadying as he drew near. "That's George, isn't it—my nephew?"

"Yes."

He never stopped. He rammed down his hat, he took hold of Challenger, and he set out to have a chat with George.

"Hounds are running north!" roared Sir John in despair.

His voice may have reached Pembroke or it may not. But George was tearing due south, and even Rupert was uncertain whether he had bolted with George or George had bolted with him. All he knew was that, given a safe fall, or more luck than a National entry would have any right to anticipate, the stable would sit up over the gruel that night. It was so obviously neck or nothing, and the primary question was, whose?

There was a long stretch of pasture, and here Rupert made the pace. He was a clean-built three-quarter bred, with Laughing Water for his sire, and sound as a bell. But he was young and raw, and no judge of distances, and George was much the same, with a preference at the moment for any distance so long as it was substantial. That open space gave them both heart, for Challenger had no turn of racing speed, only a capacity for eliminating blunders.

The hedge at the far end of that elastic turf faced George with one of those little problems which, however unsettling in normal hunting, mean so much more when an infuriated relative is thundering in pursuit. Over the hedge there was a drop into the lane and then an uphill jump—an in and out—before any future was assured. But to hesitate was to be lost. With a sinking heart, George went over and landed in chaos in the lane below. For just at that moment the hunting party who followed hounds by ratepayers' upkeep and consent were passing underneath, and the Captain, receiving a severe jolt from Rupert's shoulder, fell off, and was lost to history in the ditch. Rupert also was down, but that fresh sixteen-hand black was not, and

George without hesitation mounted, and was gone just as Challenger blotted out the sky and crashed into the ladies, who, riding astride (according to the edict of all the best riding schools), were instantly unseated. Pembroke never said one word of consolation or godspeed. He swung round in the lane and went charging after George.

They passed through the little country town of Borcombe, and were a source of comment for many hours. The view of Richards, the butcher, was that Mr. Pembroke must have been in chase of a runaway, being too good a horseman to hammer along hard roads, least of all with children just out of school and everything. So it was obviously a runaway. Mr. Hogbin, the grocer, hearing on such sound evidence the real facts of the case, and knowing a terrified horse invariably comes to grief, felt bound, in the sacred cause of truth, to report, however reluctantly, that the poor young gentleman was severely injured, though not given up, at which Mr. Quinby, who "undertook" for the best people on such unhappy occasions as arose, took up his hat and was to be seen walking with suggestive speed past the establishment of Mr. Havelock, who, amongst more general carpentry, was also not indifferent to the more melancholy aspects of life's pilgrimage.

Whereas Pembroke began to overhaul the Captain's black about two miles towards Marshbanks Station, and it was where the road goes over a bridge that George decided to take to open country. This he did with the courage of despair by taking a five-bar gate off the tar, and making a line towards the railway crossing. Pembroke lost a trifle

then, but he could afford to—he knew by his expert knowledge that George was in a cul-de-sac. He even permitted himself an ugly laugh. The affair was as good as finished. He saw someone taking it with the butt end. But George, though not hilarious, was calm. He had his doubts about the black, which was already blown, but he had not fully realised that he was trapped—that there was, in a word, no way out. Meanwhile, as Pembroke had eased up and was waiting, a grim smile on his lips, it was evident a crisis had arisen. And suddenly, like an answer to prayer, coming round the bend of the line was a puff of smoke—the 1.5 for London. Without hesitation George raced for the line, slid off the saddle, climbed the fence, and was running like a rabbit up the line. Too late Pembroke spurred wildly across the intervening distance. The train drew up, stopped, and then moved on, and from a window his nephew's head looked out, and, blowing kisses of affectionate farewell, he was carried rapidly out of range.

* * * * *

It was an hour later Pembroke came upon Clara Marriott at a check in Marley Wood, and for some reason best known to himself Sir John went wandering off along the green ride towards old Peters, who was watching the point the fox would break as foxes most times do.

"I want to ask you something," George said, and then words, as usual, failed him.

She gave him a shy, quick look just to make certain, then, leaning forward, said with fond laughter in her eyes: "You silly old Uncle George!"





"The trusty maid never told a soul in Ladywell that, coming in at the moment, she found Mr. Robson exchanging a kiss with his wife."

MRS. ROBSON'S DISCOVERY

By W. PETT RIDGE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

IN many respects, an ideal household. It had an admirable servant, and Ladywell folk will tell you, in confidence, that this, in a domestic establishment, is half the battle. Mr. Robson left the house in time to catch the 8.47 a.m. to Cannon Street, and Mrs. Robson went, a few minutes later, to get the 8.57 that travelled direct to Charing Cross. They were home, in a general way, by half-past six at night.

"And both earning good money, and with no children," said Ladywell matrons.

They added, with a sigh, that some people had all the luck.

You yourself would guess that husband and wife, one engaged in the City and the other in the West End, found many subjects for discussion when they met after the day's work. There was a time when this might have been a shrewd comment; it no longer possessed the element of accuracy. The Robsons' maid could have whispered that if people called, then her master and mistress joined in the conversation; left alone, they exchanged little more than

words of one syllable. The maid could have announced, too (only that, as Ladywell mentioned, she was just about as communicative as a brick wall) that the alteration in methods came when Mrs. Robson moved from one establishment in Oxford Street to another further west, and obtained an increase of salary that made her income larger than that earned by her husband.

It can be added that Mrs. Robson took her holidays in the company of an unmarried sister in August; Robson went away, with his friend and colleague Barwick, in September.

It was Barwick who, encountering Mrs. Robson on a Sunday morning in the Recreation Grounds, conveyed information on a particular subject. He did it with an air of mystery.

"I'm not supposed to disclose the facts," he said, "but I thought you'd be interested to know. We're going to give your husband a testimonial."

"Sorry I can't see my way to making any contribution," she remarked.

"Such a thing," declared Barwick, "was not expected, and in no way desired. This is an office scheme, and he won't know about it until it's sprung on him at the annual dinner."

"But why should you tell me, of all people in the world?"

"I'll explain," said Barwick patiently. "I find it impossible to shut my eyes to the circumstance that you and he are no longer on the terms you used to be."

"Nothing, Mr. Barwick, escapes your highly trained observation."

"Be that as it may, it occurred to me that it wouldn't do you any harm if you came to the dinner and overheard what those who know him well have to say about him. You could bring your sister, and I'd arrange for you both to have a quiet feed in the grill-room, and at the proper moment I'd smuggle you into a gallery in the room where the dinner is held, and you'd see and hear everything without being either heard or seen."

"This," she said, "is altogether too amusing for words. So far as I understand, the idea is that, having listened to a group of City men speaking under the influence of burgundy, I shall instantly change my own sober views. Mr. Barwick, you mean well, no doubt, but that can be said of other diplomatists who blunder."

"I never pretend to be over and above tactful."

She glanced at her watch. "Where are you and he going this afternoon?"

"We thought of a Queen's Hall concert. Would you care——"

Mrs. Robson shook her head. "I can't be cross with you," she remarked, "because I owe you so much for relieving me of his company."

Barwick gave himself the time to choose his words. "I hear you spoken of, Mrs. Robson," he said, "as a first-class business woman. I can only say that in private life you're more than a trifle difficult to get on with." The lady beamed, as some do in accepting a compliment.

Barwick received a note on the following morning. He turned to the signature, Aileen Robson. The note communicated the fact that the writer had been talking to her sister, who, it appeared, was feeling depressed, and believed that contemplation of a set of men at dinner who did not know they were being watched was the exactly correct remedy. Mrs. Robson, mentioning that her sister had a keen sense of humour, begged Mr. Barwick to furnish date, hour, and place of the event.

At the restaurant on the evening the two ladies entered a dimly lighted gallery. Mrs. Robson implored her companion, in a whisper, not to laugh; the farce below would encourage signs of amusement, but these must be restrained.

"I'll do my best," promised the girl, "but I do hope they won't be too funny!"

About forty guests sat at the table, and Barwick had chosen the moment of arrival discreetly; the vivacity attendant on a meal was over, and the chairman was putting on pince-nez, examining notes. Two of the guests left and returned with something covered by green baize, which they placed on a side-table; the neighbours of Mr. Robson engaged him in persistent conversation whilst this was being done. The vice-chairman rose and gave the toast of "The Firm." The chairman replied. Neither could be reckoned a highly gifted speaker, and in the gallery Mrs. Robson's sister held handkerchief over mouth as they bungled along with "What I mean to say," and "The point I'm trying to make clear is this." The girl declared that if it went on much longer, she would most assuredly have a fit.

"There is worse to come," mentioned Mrs. Robson.

Barwick, at the pianoforte, sang a song to his own accompaniment, and Mrs.



the chairman, finding his second paper of notes, but disregarding them, and now speaking fluently, announced that he had a gratifying task to perform; one which gave him, as a partner in the firm, considerable pleasure. A certain gentleman, seated at that table, had completed his twenty-first year in the firm's employment. He could remember when young Robson—now no longer so young—came to the

"For his own part, he was content with the friends he possessed, and he would never omit, in looking at the rose bowl, to think of them. (Cheers.)"

Robson's sister admitted it was a fair baritone voice. Mr. Robson, called upon by the chairman, gave a ballad that seemed to bring memories to the elder lady in the gallery. One or two of the others followed, and then

office. He could recollect the occasion when Robson made his choice of a wife, and settled down to a married career that had been, the chairman understood, an unalloyed success. Many husbands

owed a great deal to their respective wives, and most husbands failed to pay the bill. (Laughter.) He felt sure Robson was indebted to Mrs. Robson—the chairman wished it had been possible for the lady to be present—and he knew that no man could work in the City as Robson had worked unless he found, after the labours of the day, complete happiness at home. So Robson's friends and colleagues had selected a gift which would be, the chairman hoped, acceptable alike to Mr. Robson and to Mrs. Robson, and here was a rose bowl to be taken home to Ladywell with the hearty compliments and the earnest good wishes of the donors. (Cheers.)

"Now," whispered Mrs. Robson in the gallery, "now we shall hear the voice of humbug."

Robson, in a few words, made no attempt to avail himself of the opportunity of referring to his home life. He said the incident was unexpected, and he supposed it would be modest to declare it was undeserved. He valued the friendships he had been able to collect during his life; sometimes he found himself wishing they were greater in number, but that could not now be helped. The older one grew, the more difficult it became to secure fresh companionship. For his own part, he was content with the friends he possessed, and he would never omit, in looking at the rose bowl, to think of them. (Cheers.)

Barwick went up expectantly to the gallery. Mrs. Robson said that, assuming the diversions of the entertainment were now over, it would be advisable perhaps to get along to Charing Cross and secure a mid-Kent train.

"You've seen for yourself," urged Barwick, "how much he is respected by the men who know him."

"He appears to belong to your Mutual Admiration Society."

"May I venture to hope that you will become a member?"

"No desire whatever to do so," she retorted. "I forget whether you have met my sister."

Barwick, in the character of a faithful knight, escorted both ladies so far as the station, and afterwards undertook to find a tramcar for Mrs. Robson's sister. The night was fine, and the Embankment attractive; the two walked up and down there, discussing the situation of the Ladywell couple. Mrs. Robson's sister agreed it was a pity they had drifted apart; in

a burst of confidence she mentioned that not once, but no less than three times, she herself had rejected offers of marriage because of the unlucky experience of the other member of her family.

"Nothing will ever persuade me," said the girl resolutely, "that my sister is in any way to blame. Still, there's no reason why you and I shouldn't discuss it another time."

Barwick and the young woman did meet on several occasions, and the talk did not always restrict itself to the item on the agenda. But that matter was argued, and information pieced together. The rose bowl, it seemed, arrived at Ladywell, and Mrs. Robson asked casually, "How much were you foolish enough to pay for that?" and Robson answered, in an equally off-hand way, that he had picked it up as a bargain. For the rest, a ridiculous game was being played with the gift. Robson, before leaving of a morning, placed it at the centre of the table of the dining-room; Mrs. Robson, so soon as he had gone, put it in a retired place on the sideboard.

"Just like a pair of naughty children," remarked Mrs. Robson's sister.

Robson had, it seemed, for the fuller employment of spare time, taken over the secretaryship of a Women's League (mainly because his wife counselled him to have nothing to do with it). The League, to the distress of its more active supporters, had been for some time on the down grade, and especially in regard to its finances. Robson grappled with the matter in a business-like way. Laggard subscribers were informed that, unless they paid up, their names would be struck off; he induced the committee to make examples of one or two, and these implored to be forgiven and to be taken back. Robson looked up a newspaper man, a friend of his, and the League found its work described or alluded to in various journals. Robson's post of a morning excited the silent derision of his wife; once, on looking over the envelopes, all in feminine handwriting and some with crests, she forgot to play the usual game with the rose bowl. This grave oversight worried her during the day at Oxford Street, and when a new and energetic director there made a recommendation concerning the department of which she had charge, she rejected the proposal brusquely.

"I think you haven't been here long enough," she said, "to decide what should be done."

"And I think you have been here too long," he snapped. By the end of the week Mrs. Robson received notice to leave.

It was thought by Barwick and Mrs. Robson's sister that disappearance of personal income would solve the difficulty at Ladywell; their expectations were not fulfilled. Mrs. Robson accepted from her husband an increased contribution towards the expenses of the household, but made no other change in her deportment. She joined the League which he was managing.

Mrs. Robson obtained an appointment with a new firm, and, before taking it up, resolved to show independence by attending a meeting of the League, and by moving a vote of censure on the secretary. She confided the plans to her sister, whom she thought could be trusted; I have no doubt in my own mind that the sister told Barwick, and it is likely Barwick gave a hint to Robson, who never professed enjoyment of scenes. At any rate, the secretary was absent from the meeting, and when the minutes had been confirmed, a note from him was read. Robson mentioned that the finances of the League were now in a satisfactory condition, and his work might be reckoned over. He tendered his farewell; assured the ladies that they and their League had his best wishes. Then

began the ordeal of Mrs. Robson. She listened amazedly.

"A charming and most engaging personality," said one.

"To watch his admirable methods has been little short of an education," declared another fervently.

"We can never forget his courtesies and his most valuable assistance."

"In the best and truest sense of the word, a gentleman!"

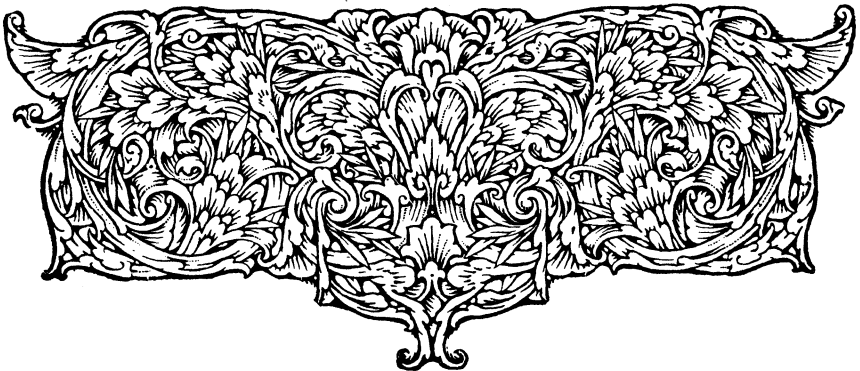
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Mrs. Robson, deeply impressed, made a purchase at the florist's in Lewisham. At breakfast, the next morning, the rose bowl, set by her at the centre of the table, was filled. She began to talk with animation so soon as the meal started; her husband, once he had recovered from astonishment, followed her lead.

"I mustn't miss the 8.47," he remarked presently. "You're catching the later one, I suppose?"

"In future," she said, with a smile, "I shall walk to the station with you."

The trusty maid never told a soul in Ladywell that, coming in at the moment, she found Mr. Robson exchanging a kiss with his wife. And this was as well, for if the maid had communicated the fact, not a soul in Ladywell would at that period have credited the statement.





"Romance is never far away. Very soon—sooner than you now suppose—it will come to you. I will show you how to meet and recognise it." "Thanks very much," said the girl, in a business-like voice.

THE AMATEUR PROPHET

By K. R. G. BROWNE

ILLUSTRATED BY A. WALLIS MILLS

WHEN the grey-eyed girl, without so much as a backward glance, left the train at Lower Windlefold, young Andy Forrest, huddled in his corner, stared after her with an expression of brooding melancholy upon his normally care-free countenance. It was his opinion that Fate had behaved in a singularly rotten manner.

An hour before, having caught the train by a superhuman effort and the skin of his teeth, Andy had inwardly rejoiced to find the compartment tenanted by only one other person, and that other a girl of unusually attractive appearance—a girl, in fact, far superior to any he had hitherto encountered in his not uneventful existence. To Andy, an assiduous reader of fiction in its lighter forms, the situation had been instantly recognisable as one which opens five out of every ten magazine stories. Beautiful girl, travelling alone; handsome young man, catching train by miracle at imminent personal risk; jocular comments thereon and social ice broken thereby; offer of luncheon basket; acceptance of same;

much animated converse; discovery that both are intending visitors at the same house. Andy, regarding the position as personally arranged by a benign Providence, had attempted to develop matters along conventional lines.

Unfortunately the grey-eyed girl was either no magazine-reader or unusually dense. She missed her cue. To Andy's jocular comment upon the art of catching trains she had replied with a glance which caused him to feel like some uninteresting specimen from the insect world. When, having in a measure recovered his nerve, he had made another gentlemanly effort to establish conversational relations, the result had been the same. Finally, a bare half-hour out from Waterloo, he had been compelled to subside, hot and humiliated, into a morning paper, while the cause of his discomfiture, apparently oblivious of his presence, continued to extract entertainment from her book. Taking it all in all, it had been a pretty ghastly journey. It will therefore be understood that when the grey-

eyed girl left the train at Lower Windlefold (without so much as a backward glance), Andy watched her depart from his ken with a feeling that this must be one of Destiny's liverish days.

Ten minutes later, however, as the train ran into Rutley Magna, four miles on from Lower Windlefold, and he discerned upon the platform the vivid red head and pugnacious jaw of his friend and ally, Mr. Philip (Pip) Allingham, Andy's depression lightened considerably. As he swung himself and his baggage from the train, the station lit up to Pip's welcoming grin.

"Wotcher, Andy! How goes it? Train's late. Come on. Car outside."

"Pip," said Andy, as the car whirled out of the station yard on two wheels and dropped at an excessive speed down the long hill to the village, "it's like a breath of sea air to see your alleged face again. I got your letter yesterday, but I couldn't read much of it. What was that about a circus to-morrow?"

"Not a circus," said Mr. Allingham, unmoved by these aspersions upon his calligraphy, "a charity *fête*. Sort of glorified bazaar. Mater's idea, of course. Red flannel cummerbunds for the Cingalese, or something. It will be some small affair, my lad. Roundabouts, coconuts, swings and what-not. The entire county's rallying round, by all accounts. And you and I, friend of my youth, are billed to provide the best show of the lot. By the way, I bet you didn't bring that grey female wig I asked for."

"Grey wig?" said Andy, with apprehension; twenty-five years' acquaintance with Pip Allingham's distorted sense of humour warned him to expect the worst. "No, I must have missed that bit. What do you want it for?"

"You," answered Mr. Allingham, rounding a corner with a clear inch to spare. "Fortune-telling."

"Fortune-telling? What the deuce do you mean?"

"Telling fortunes. It's all fixed up. You're going to tell the fortunes of our simple rustics, while I take their money. I've got a peerless outfit for you—mouldy old shawl, spectacles, and so forth. I must send to Wycombe for a wig in the morning."

"Dash it all, Pip," said the agitated Andy, "what on earth—if you think I'm going to dress up and—"

"Oh, yes, you are. You can't back out now. The Mater's awfully keen on the idea.

It'll simply coin money for her blooming charity. No one'll know you're not the genuine article. I'll tell you the details after dinner."

They swung perilously over a bridge and into a long drive. Andy, sitting mute beside his friend, had returned to the depth of gloom. Only too well he knew Mr. Allingham and Mr. Allingham's eccentric ideas; only too well, also, he knew the futility of protest. . . .

On the afternoon following Mr. Forrest's arrival, the big meadow at the rear of the house bore a very creditable resemblance to Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday. Lady Allingham was one of those who believe that charity, while beginning at home, should not overlook the need for it abroad. To assist this excellent principle it was her custom periodically to stage *fêtes*, bazaars, sewing-bees and entertainments of a like character, whose avowed and invariably satisfied ambition was the collection of large sums of money on behalf of unostentatious but none the less praiseworthy organisations of a missionary nature. As Lady Allingham was quite the most resolute person in the county, none said her nay; it was recognised that her activities gave useful employment to a number of people, afforded healthy entertainment to still more, and did no lasting harm to the ultimate beneficiaries.

On this occasion Lady Allingham, who never did things by halves, had surpassed herself. The meadow hummed with life. Tents studded its fair surface; a roundabout wailed gruesomely; a score of quaint sports invited the custom of the idler. The Cingalese bade fair to benefit considerably.

In a corner a small, futuristically-striped tent reared its be-bannered head. By its door stood a board intriguingly inscribed: "MADAME MALVOLIO, THE WORLD-RENOUNDED FORTUNE-TELLER. 6d." Within the tent Mr. Pip Allingham, arrestingly arrayed in a scarlet waistcoat, a purple neckerchief, and bell-bottomed trousers of a vivid check, was engaged in imparting final advice to his accomplice in deception.

"Tell 'em what you like, old son. Fill 'em up to the brim. Only, for Heaven's sake, steer clear of libel! Better stick to the future. You know—tall, dark strangers, long sea voyages, dangerous illnesses, and all that guff. They'll lap it up if you pitch it right. If I spot anyone I know, I'll nip in and give you a few pointers. Mind your wig don't slip."

Mr. Forrest presented a spectacle to strike awe into the bravest soul. A dishevelled grey wig, a tattered shawl, immense steel-rimmed glasses, and a voluminous skirt that tripped him at every step, combined in an effort so bizarre that Mr. Allingham was almost inclined to fear that he had overdone it.

"I don't think so, though," he observed thoughtfully. "The worse you look, the more they'll believe. All the same, you *do* look a female thug, Andy."

"You needn't gloat," said Andy warmly. "You've got nothing to do but hide in that beard and whiskers and make a noise outside. I've got all the dirty work. Why don't *you* do this part of it?"

"I'm no actor, old man," said the diplomatic Pip. "Remember how well you showed up in those theatricals a year ago. I haven't got the nerve either. You'll have a dashed good time, I shouldn't wonder. Now squat down at your jolly little table, and I'll start roping in the rustics."

Rapidly he affixed a bushy black beard and whiskers, cast a final glance round the gloomy tent, and dived into the open. In a moment his voice, loud and compelling, tore through the canvas.

"Come along, ladies and gents! Walk up! Walk up! Madame Malvolio, the only genuine fortune-teller, is at your service! Sixpence in silver or bronze takes you inside! The whole future for sixpence! Come along, ladies and gents! One at a time, please!"

At first it seemed that the ladies and gents felt no craving for the future's secrets; it sufficed their simple needs to gather round and gape at the weird figure of Mr. Allingham. At length, however, the latter's eloquence had its effect. Amid much whispering and a storm of giggles, a large and bashful yokel was thrust violently forward and announced his readiness to try his luck. An example once given, others followed the lead; in five minutes Pip was marshalling the applicants into a queue.

Within the tent Andy was unexpectedly enjoying himself. His early trepidation vanished at sight of the manner in which each timid client, at the first glimpse of the repulsive hag leering from the dark corner, gasped and perceptibly hesitated; he felt gratified at these unsolicited tributes to his make-up. With his first few visitors, countryfolk all, he confined himself strictly to non-committal utterances, dealing exclusively with dark strangers, sea voyages, and severe maladies. As, however, he

perceived that not one of the seekers after knowledge had the least doubt of his genuineness, he became aware of a wicked craving to launch out to some extent.

Suddenly the curtain, falling behind a departing victim, jerked aside again to disclose the sinister visage of Mr. Allingham. The latter spoke in a guarded whisper.

"Local gent. Retired Army man. Widower. Keen on golf. Dabbles on the Stock Exchange. Generally loses his money. I know—he let me in once."

He vanished. Andy, peering through the gloom, saw enter a tall, thin, weatherbeaten individual, fiercely upright, fiercely moustached, wearing the faintly deprecating smile of one who makes a fool of himself in a good cause.

"Sit down," said Andy solemnly. "Why have you come here? This is no pastime for one who has fought in wars."

The local gent (to use Mr. Allingham's description) started slightly. Andy, perceiving that he had touched the spot, pursued his advantage.

"You have come, I see, in a spirit of mockery," he said sepulchral. "You do not believe. Very well. I will convince you. Give me your hand. Once you were a soldier of high rank. Now you are idle, spending your days in fruitless pursuit of a small white ball upon the green turf. Yours is a life of ease, yet you are not content. You are accustomed to endanger your substance by gambling, not with cards, dice or horses, but with what the modern tongue names stocks and shares. In this, as you know, you are unwise, yet you persist. Now do you still mock?"

The local gent did not mock. For a space he opened and closed his mouth like a moribund fish. It was plain that his scepticism had sustained a rude shock.

"What is it that you desire to know?" Andy asked solemnly, fighting down an impulse to unfeeling mirth. The local gent started again.

"Oh—er—I don't know. Nothing, really. H'm! Nothing much. Still—h'm—you seem to know a good deal, certainly. Ha! Ha! Let me see. I wonder now—speaking of stocks and shares, perhaps you can tell me if Uruguayan Railroads are going up or down in the near future? Ha! Ha!" He spoke half facetiously, as one who humours a precocious infant.

"Both," said Andy promptly. It seemed the obvious thing for Uruguayan Railroads to do.

"Both?"

"Both. First down, then up." This, again, seemed a tolerably safe guess.

"I see," said the local gent, obviously impressed. "Thank you. Now——"

"Your time is up," said Andy, who knew when to stop. "That is all."

The local gent hesitated, seemed about to speak, thought better of it, rose and departed. Andy, smiling happily, made ready for his next client. After all, this game had its points.

Then, as the curtain swung aside once more, the smile was wiped from his face. He sat staring blankly at the girl who entered as if she were some ghostly visitant from the grave. For she was the grey-eyed, fair-haired lady of his yesterday's humiliation in the train.

She came forward composedly and took her seat before him. Andy for a paralysed moment could think of nothing but that she was even more charming than he had supposed. He realised that in the past twenty-four hours he had thought of her a good deal. With an effort, noting that she was surveying him curiously, he pulled himself together. He cleared his throat.

"Ah," he said gravely, "you, like many others, are a mocker. You, too, do not believe."

"So far," said the grey-eyed girl calmly, "I have heard nothing worth believing."

Andy blushed. Frantically he sought for something to say. He felt hot and unhappy; his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. Mentally he consigned Pip Allingham, who was responsible for this predicament, to a locality where fortune-tellers are both unknown and unnecessary. And then, quite suddenly, inspiration was upon him; he saw how this incident, apparently so unfortunate, might be turned to advantage.

"Give me your hand," he commanded.

The grey-eyed girl obeyed, and Andy thrilled to the core at the contact. He gazed devotedly at her palm. It was her left hand, and his soul exulted at the absence of a ring thereon.

"You are young," he observed dreamily. "As yet Romance has not come your way. As yet you are heart-whole and fancy-free."

He paused hopefully, but the grey-eyed girl offered no confirmation of this diagnosis.

"But," continued Andy resolutely, "Romance is never far away. Very soon—sooner than you now suppose—it will come to you. I will show you how to meet and recognise it."

"Thanks very much," said the girl, in a business-like voice.

"To-morrow—at three of the afternoon, go to—to Lipscomb's Mill, and there wait. Presently you will see approaching a motor-car, driven by a young man. Pay no heed. He will ask if he may assist you on your way to the town. The rest is in your hands. It is for you to say if Romance shall pass you by. I can see nothing else in your hand, except that you have recently—yesterday, I think—completed a long journey. That is all."

The grey-eyed girl rose leisurely to her feet.

"This is all most interesting," she said. "I must remember to keep an eye open for Romance. Good afternoon." The curtain closed behind her. . . .

The remainder of the afternoon is undeserving of comment, save to note that thenceforward Andy, who had much to think of, confined his prognostications entirely to dark strangers, voyages, and diseases. It was remarked by his impressed clients that he had the absent manner of the true visionary.

* * * * *

"Andrew," said Lady Allingham, "if you have nothing better to do this afternoon, I wonder if you would be kind enough to take a message into Windlefold for me. Philip won't be back from Rutley until late, and I have no one else to send."

"Of course," said Andy gladly. This mission coincided admirably with his own plans. "What is it?"

"A note for Colonel Marsham. You haven't met him, I think. He lives in the white house by the bridge. It's very good of you. Will you bring an answer?"

"Certainly," said Andy. "Certainly."

A quarter of an hour later he slowed Pip's two-seater on the crest of a hill and peered about him anxiously. His choice of Lipscomb's Mill as a rendezvous had been governed by the fact that it was some time since he had last been in the district, and he could at the moment think of no other suitable trysting-place. He was now considerably chagrined to find that Lipscomb's Mill was not where he had supposed it to be; the landscape revealed no such landmark.

Intending to refresh his memory by inquiry, Andy trod on the accelerator and slid swiftly down the hill. Suddenly, as he rounded a curve, his heart missed a beat; the car swerved violently and slowed to a crawl. A hundred yards ahead was the

slender, unmistakable figure of the grey-eyed girl.

Andy looked at his watch. Five minutes to three; plainly she was even now on her way to the tryst. Smiling happily, he bore down upon her, stopped the car, and lifted his cap.

If you're going as far as Windleford, I should be very glad."

"Jump in," said Andy gleefully.

For a time they travelled in silence, the girl gazing placidly ahead, Andy eyeing her furtively.

"It seems to me," he remarked suddenly,



"Well, Mr. Forrest," she said calmly, "and how is the fortune-telling?"

"I don't want to be impertinent," he said politely, "but can I give you a lift?"

The girl studied him gravely.

"Thanks very much," she said at last.

"I am rather late, as a matter of fact.

"that I've seen you before somewhere. Oh, I know—in the train yesterday!"

The grey eyes inspected him without interest.

"Oh, were you the man who wanted the

window shut? I'm afraid I shouldn't have recognised you."

Deeply wounded, Andy took refuge in a moody silence. Dash it all, why was she so terse with a chap? It seemed impossible to make any headway at all. For a space he drove in a sombre silence; as the outskirts of Windlefold crept up to meet them, he made another attempt.

"It's a funny thing——"

"Will you put me down here, please?" said the girl. Mechanically Andy stopped the car, and before he could voice a protest she had opened the door and stepped down. "Thanks awfully for the lift," she said, and, with that, nodded, smiled and turned away.

For at least three minutes after she had disappeared round a corner Andy sat motionless, wearing the expression of a man who has just learned that his chosen horse came in last but one. Then he sighed heavily, let in the clutch, and drove on.

At the white house by the bridge it appeared that Colonel Marsham was at home.

"This way, sir," said the maid, and opened a door. "Mr. Forrest!" she announced to the interior.

At sight of the room's occupant, Andy, crossing the threshold, started convulsively and uttered a quaint, strangled noise. Colonel Marsham was tall, thin, weather-beaten, fiercely upright and fiercely moustached. Andy was aware of a sinking sensation; life seemed to be nothing but one confounded *contretemps* after another. Why could not Providence have warned him that Colonel Marsham and Pip Allingham's "local gent" took the same size in hats? He made ready for the worst.

The Colonel, however, displayed not the smallest symptom of recognition.

"Mr. Forrest?" he repeated, in the non-committal tone of one who is not sure whether his visitor is someone of importance or merely the man from the gas company. With an effort, Andy recovered something of his customary composure. He explained his mission.

"Thank you," said the Colonel, taking the note. "Sit down, won't you?"

Andy sat down. He felt a little unmanned by the afternoon's events. He observed with alarm that the Colonel was disposed to be conversational. Why the dickens couldn't the man read his letter and let him go?

"You were at Lady Allingham's *fête*

yesterday, Mr. Forrest? H'm! Most successful affair. Most. H'm! Capitally organised. I was sorry, nevertheless, to see that she had extended her hospitality to some rascal of a fortune-teller. You noticed the woman, no doubt? Trading on the credulity of the public. H'm! Positively illegal, you know. Money by false pretences, of course. Quite illegal. H'm! As a Justice of the Peace, I am not sure that I ought not to take some action. Of course, it was on behalf of charity, which—ha, ha!—is supposed to cover a multitude of sins. But still——"

Andy bowed his head in resignation. Fate, beyond all question, had it in for him. First the grey-eyed girl, now this idiotic old buffer. Well——

At this juncture he heard the door open again. The Colonel glanced round.

"Ah, my dear, come in. This is Mr. Forrest, who has kindly brought a note from Lady Allingham. H'm! Mr. Forrest—my niece, Penelope."

To a certain extent one may sympathise with Andrew. These repeated buffets from the fist of Circumstance might well have unnerved greater men than he. He stood now and gave a very creditable impersonation of a man but newly released from a mental home; his eyes protruded; he goggled; he made ineffectual noises in his throat. The grey-eyed girl, apparently entirely unmoved by the meeting, came forward and greeted him kindly.

"How do you do, Mr. Forrest? Uncle, here's a telegram for you."

"Thank you, Penelope. H'm! If you will pardon me, I will just——"

Colonel Marsham became absorbed. Andy, inwardly raging at his inability to deal with the situation, perceived that the grey-eyed girl was smiling gently. Something in her expression caused him to feel like a child of five.

"Well, Mr. Forrest," she said calmly "and how is the fortune-telling?"

Andy, taken completely by surprise, behaved as if stung by a wasp. He almost bounded in the air.

"I—I—what? H—how did you know?"

Penelope pointed to his right hand, across which ran a broad white scar, the memento of a somewhat hectic trench-raid in the autumn of 1917.

"That. I noticed it when you were—er—amusing yourself with the window in the train, and I noticed it again yesterday when you were amusing yourself with *me*. Then

I recognised your voice. Otherwise your disguise was perfect, I admit."

"B-but—" began the staggered Andrew.

He was interrupted by a species of yelp from the Colonel.

"Penelope! Most extraordinary thing! Most! That fortune-telling woman was right, after all! This wire is from my broker. Uruguayan Railroads have gone up again. I've cleared—let me see—a hundred and eleven pounds!" Excitement had him in its grip.

"That's very nice, uncle," said Penelope.

"Isn't it, Mr. Forrest?"

"Er—" said Mr. Forrest.

Thus reminded of his visitor, the Colonel started; he seemed momentarily confused.

"Ah, Mr. Forrest. Quite. I must explain. Most remarkable—er—coincidence. Most. H'm! That fortune-teller I spoke of just now—er—I subjected her powers to a small test yesterday. H'm! Pure chance, no doubt, but her forecast has turned out—er—substantially accurate. Tallied with my own, in fact. Ha, ha! I felt it necessary, you see, to obtain some kind of evidence, you understand, in case—"

"But, uncle," said his niece soothingly, "you know you wouldn't really be so unkind. Think of Lady Allingham's feelings."

"That reminds me," said the Colonel, dropping the fortune-teller with obvious relief; "Lady Allingham invites us to dine to-morrow, Penelope. Will you say, Mr. Forrest, that we shall be delighted? H'm! Now you will have some tea with us, I hope."

"Thanks very much," said Andy rather dazedly.

"That's right," said Penelope brightly.

"Perhaps you know how to tell our fortunes by the tea-leaves."

* * * * *

In the cool of dusk the following evening two persons sat in a corner of the broad terrace. A dozen yards away Lady Allingham, with admirable perception, held Pip and the Colonel in animated discussion.

"All the same," said Andy, with a note of triumph, "you can't deny that you *did* turn up at Lipscomb's Mill, as I suggested."

Penelope raised her charming eyebrows.

"I did no such thing! Did you seriously think I should rush out to Lipscomb's Mill and wait there meekly till you came because you'd told me to? When you overtook me, I'd been to leave a message for uncle just outside Windlefold. I was miles away from Lipscomb's Mill. And, anyway," she added, rather inconsequentially, "the Mill was burned down last month."

"Great Scot! So that was why I couldn't find it. But—"

"Oh, that was it! I *was* rather surprised when you came up, because I was thinking you'd be waiting patiently at the Mill. I hoped you were, because I thought it would do you good."

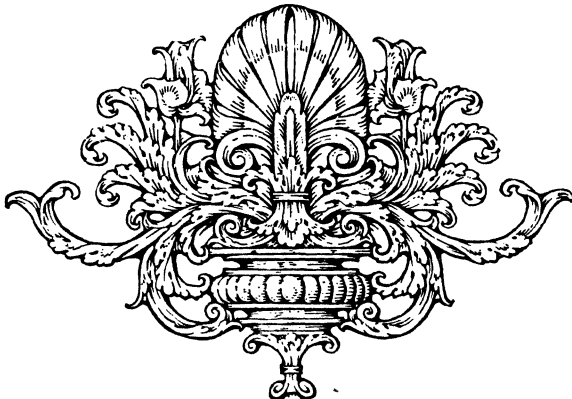
"Good Heavens!" groaned Andy. "I'm a beautiful fortune-teller!"

"Never mind," said Penelope gently. "Uncle's very glad he met you, anyway, because he really did act on your advice about those shares, you know, though he won't admit it, of course."

Andy turned upon her with a wild light in his eyes.

"Blow your uncle!" he said fiercely. "What about *you*?"

But it was some weeks before he got a really satisfactory answer.





LEVELLING UP.

THE FRIEND: Haven't you begun housekeeping yet, then?

THE NEWLY MARRIEDS: No, we're waiting until we've saved up enough to live in keeping with the style of the wedding presents.

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

THE CHOW.

By C. Kennett Burrow.

BOTH the man and the dog seemed tired, both were muddy, and as they passed my gate (it was a new gate, beautifully painted, and I was hanging over it with conscious pride), I had the impression that the pair were not on the best of terms. The man was not a tramp: he had a furtive look, but it was not the tramp's furtivity. Moreover, tramps never go about with dogs, and if they did they would not select chows as travelling companions. The cap with ear-flaps, the blue-spotted neckcloth and somewhat ragged puttees were, on the whole, non-committal.

Just after he had passed my gate the man paused and hesitated; the dog immediately sat down in the road and stared at him. I then observed that the dog was attached to the man's left arm by a stout cord. I thought at first that the stranger might be a wandering carpenter, and that he had stopped to admire my new gate; but when he turned and looked

back, he fixed his gaze on me, which was disappointing. The dog also gazed at me.

"Don't look at me, look at the gate," I said cheerily. "It's a new gate."

"So it is, so it is," said the man. "An' in these times, too!" He drew nearer, and the dog preceded him by the length of the cord.

"That's a nice chow," I said.

"As a chow 'e's right enough, but as a dawg—well, 'e's stubbornner than a pack o' mules."

"Doesn't he follow well?" I asked.

"Foller? Not much. I've 'ad to drag 'im miles an' miles, an' we've 'ad two stan'-up fights, as you might say." The pair were now close to the gate, and the dog, putting his fore-paws on the lower bar, vibrated his closely-curved tail in the chow manner, and indicated that he was delighted to make my acquaintance.

"Then he isn't your dog?" I suggested.

"Yes, 'e is—now. Bought 'im this mornin'. An' I wish I'd never set eyes on the brute."

The dog waved a paw at me; I reached down and shook it.

"Seems to 've taken a fancy to you," the man went on. "These furrin dawgs gits over me; never know where you are with 'em." He paused, sized me up, as it were, and then said: "W'y don't you buy 'im, mister?" The idea did not strike me as original; it had just occurred to me.

"How much?" I asked.

"A fiver," he said, making an effort to pat the dog's head. The dog objected.

"You'd be well rid of him at thirty shillings," I said.

"That's a fact," said the man. "Make it thirty an' a dollar for the collar." I paid over the money and took over the chow. He seemed to know that something had happened, for when I let him through the gate he dashed round in circles, trailing the cord after him until he got mixed up with it and had to be unwound.

When I took my purchase into the drawing-room Thalia was indignant, and begged me to take him away.

"Impossible," I said.

"He's a visitor. He's only called on his way to another place."

"I was watching that man at the gate," Thalia said, "and I didn't like the look of him. He stole that dog."

"Probably," I said.

"That's no concern of mine, and, anyway, there's no name on the collar. If the owners turn up, I can refer them to the other place."

"What other place?"

"The place ordained for him. Dennyson was saying, when he was over here last, that he wanted a dog, and I know Mrs. Dennyson has a fancy for chows. I bought the dog for Dennyson, and to-morrow I shall take him over."

"Oh!" said Thalia. Tea being brought in at that moment, she added: "As he's here, I shall invite him to stay to tea."

"He's beginning to work on your feelings already," I said. "Perhaps it's because he's a foreign dog."

"He's a dear," Thalia said, "and if you wouldn't mind scraping a little of the mud off him—" I took the dog into the hall and did the best I could with a clothes-brush. Then we had tea together in a most amicable manner.

The chow's appetite was not voracious; he didn't sit up and beg; he merely yearned with his eyes and occasionally, in a most engaging way, made a wagging gesture with his right paw. He was really a charming fellow, much too good, Thalia thought, for Mrs. Dennyson.

On the following morning Thalia parted from the chow almost with tears, and promised to come and see him before long. At first he seemed disposed to remain with her, but after a little persuasion we set out together, and the chow settled down to enjoy his walk, a matter of about eight miles. But as we approached Dennyson's house he grew uneasy, paused frequently and finally stopped dead. Fortunately I had the late owner's piece of cord in my pocket, and with the assistance of that we advanced. It was rather ignominious, but



IDENTIFICATION.

"ERE, 'oo was that bloke you was with last night?"

"D'yer mean the one with the fice?"

"No, not 'im, the other one."



UNIFORMITY.

"How's the rheumatism?"
 "Just about driving me mad."
 "How's the wife?"
 "Just the same."

still we did advance, until Dennyson himself met us in the road.

"Hallo!" said Dennyson. "So you've brought my dog back. Where did you find him?"

"I didn't find him," I said, "and he's not your dog yet, though he will be presently. I bought him for you."

"You've been swindled," he said—very ungratefully, I thought.

"How can he be your dog? I bought him yesterday. And, anyway, if he's your dog, why isn't your name on his collar?"

"The man I bought him from in town forgot to have it put on, and I haven't been up since."

"He doesn't seem a bit pleased to see you," I said.

"No, he didn't take to me. I can't account for it, but he didn't. And he didn't take to my wife, either. We were thinking of giving him to you."

"Indeed!" I said. "Then your theory is that the dog was stolen?"

"Yes."

"In that case," I said, "as I can't give you your own dog, you owe me thirty-five shillings—thirty for the dog and a dollar for the collar."

"Nonsense! The brute's cost me a fiver already. I don't want him." Dennyson appeared to be getting annoyed.

"Well," I said, "if you'll give him to me now, and also give me some lunch, and then take me and the dog home in the side-car, we'll say no more about it. My wife thinks no end of the dog."

Thalia was delighted to see the chow back again. She had, she reminded me, always said that he was much too good for Mrs. Dennyson. But I cannot quite get over the feeling that the foreign dog is still only a guest, and that some day he may take it into his head to change his quarters once more. Still, Thalia, who would never have a dog before, is devoted to him, and if the whole thing had been arranged—I repeat, if the whole thing had been arranged—the affair could not have ended more satisfactorily.



COUNTRY shopkeepers resort at times to ingenious methods to attract trade. A placard recently displayed in front of a draper's shop, in a busy industrial town, read as follows:—

"Step inside and get the greatest bargains you'll ever get again. The reason why I have hitherto been able to sell my goods so much cheaper than anybody else is that I am a bachelor, and do not need to make a profit for the maintenance of wife and children. It is now my duty to inform the public that this advantage will shortly be withdrawn, as I am about to be married. They will, therefore, do well to make their purchases at once at the old rate."

NEW AIDS TO HOUSEWORK.

(Singing and gymnastics form part of the curriculum of a new training college for domestic servants.)

When Sarah, our new servant, fresh from college to us came,

Our everyday existence was perhaps a trifle tame ;
But since we signed on Sarah, there has never been a lull

In the round of fresh surprises which prevents us feeling dull.

When Sarah fries the bacon or has sausages to cook,
They're timed to half a minute, but she doesn't use a book ;

She does a few gymnastics, and then up the scale will run,

And as soon as she has finished—well, the sausages are done.

THE ROMANCE KILLER.

It was evening by the sea, and the poetess walked with the professor along the margin of the ocean. "Don't you love to see the phosphorescence on the waves?" she said. "What can it be, I wonder? Is it the mermaids lighting up their lamps, or the glow from the sea-fairies' ballroom? Or can it be the reflection of golden treasure stored up in the vasty caverns of the deep?"

"I think not, madam," replied the professor. "It is only quite recently that the discovery of luminous bacilli has rendered possible any general explanation of the phenomenon, and even yet its wide applicability remains to be



THE OPTIMIST.

TOWN COUSIN: Won't you have something to read in the Tube?

COUNTRY COUSIN: No, thanks. I think I'd rather watch the scenery.

Then when she waits at dinner she is never really still,
But in between the courses gives displays of Swedish drill;
While handing the potatoes once she gave a rapid stride,
Then leapt across the table to attend the other side.
She's useful when our visitors have stayed a bit too long:
We give a wink to Sarah, and she bursts out into song.
It's always most effective, for all Sarah's sharps are flats,
And soon the whole assembly are hunting for their hats.

R. H. Roberts.

proved. It is, however, generally attributed to the decaying organic substances of diseased fishes."



THE scene was a small country fair of the old-fashioned kind, and the dialogue ran as follows:—

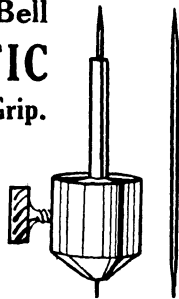
JOHNNIE (gazing in awe at the fat lady): I wish she was my mother.

MOTHER (horrified): Why, Johnnie?

JOHNNIE (defensively): Well, I do. I could borrow one of her stockings to hang up at Christmas.

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To face matter at end.]



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THE MERRY MICROBE.

The microbes of trouble and care
Make many a mortal their prey,
On worry they batten
And nourish and fatten,
The lords of dejection are they,

Till they're met by a merry young germ,
Courageous, jocose, and quick-witted,
Who, ready to rattle
His rivals in battle,
Will win, if you'll only permit it.

The symptoms that show he's at work
Are never irate or ironic.
Guffaws he evokes
From a culture of jokes,
And he bucks up the glum like a tonic.

YOUNG GIRL (to elder sister): Doris asked me to-day if you would go for a cycle ride with us to-morrow; but I told her you don't ride, and it's the maid's afternoon off, so you couldn't even if you could.



THERE is a right and a wrong way of making marrow jam. One method is to catch the marrows young, rest each one in a jam-jar and leave them on the parent plant. When the jars are completely filled with marrow, cut them off, sprinkle with sugar, cover with a pudding-cloth, and boil for three hours. That's the wrong way.



A REDUCTION OF FARES.

TRAVELLER (to railway director): I'm just off for a journey on your old iron that you call a railway. I hear it's no longer going to be quite such a daylight robbery as it has been.

DIRECTOR (complacently): Oh, do give and take a *bit*, Smith. If we did increase your fare at the booking office, you must admit we reduced it in the dining-car.

So welcome him into your hearts—
This gay microscopic buffoon—
For, breeding on banter,
He'll win in a canter,
And change cheerless winter to June.

Jessie Pope.



"How did you enjoy the rose show?"
"Oh, it was thrilling, my dear! Some of the hats were simply scrumptious; I got some topping ideas."



WAITER (at seaside hotel): No, sir, they don't catch the fish here; it all comes from London.

VISITOR: Ah, I thought I'd met this sole somewhere before!

[Facing Third Cover.]

A RECENT wedding in America, we read, was conducted entirely in verse. Any couple able to survive this ordeal at the outset of their married lives deserve to live happy ever after.

THE WINDSOR

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*From a drawing by Hugh Thomson
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*"Away he goes, he flies the rout,
Their steeds all spur and switch;
Some are thrown in, and some thrown out,
And some thrown in the ditch."*

—"A HUNTING WE WILL GO."

"Player's Country Life"

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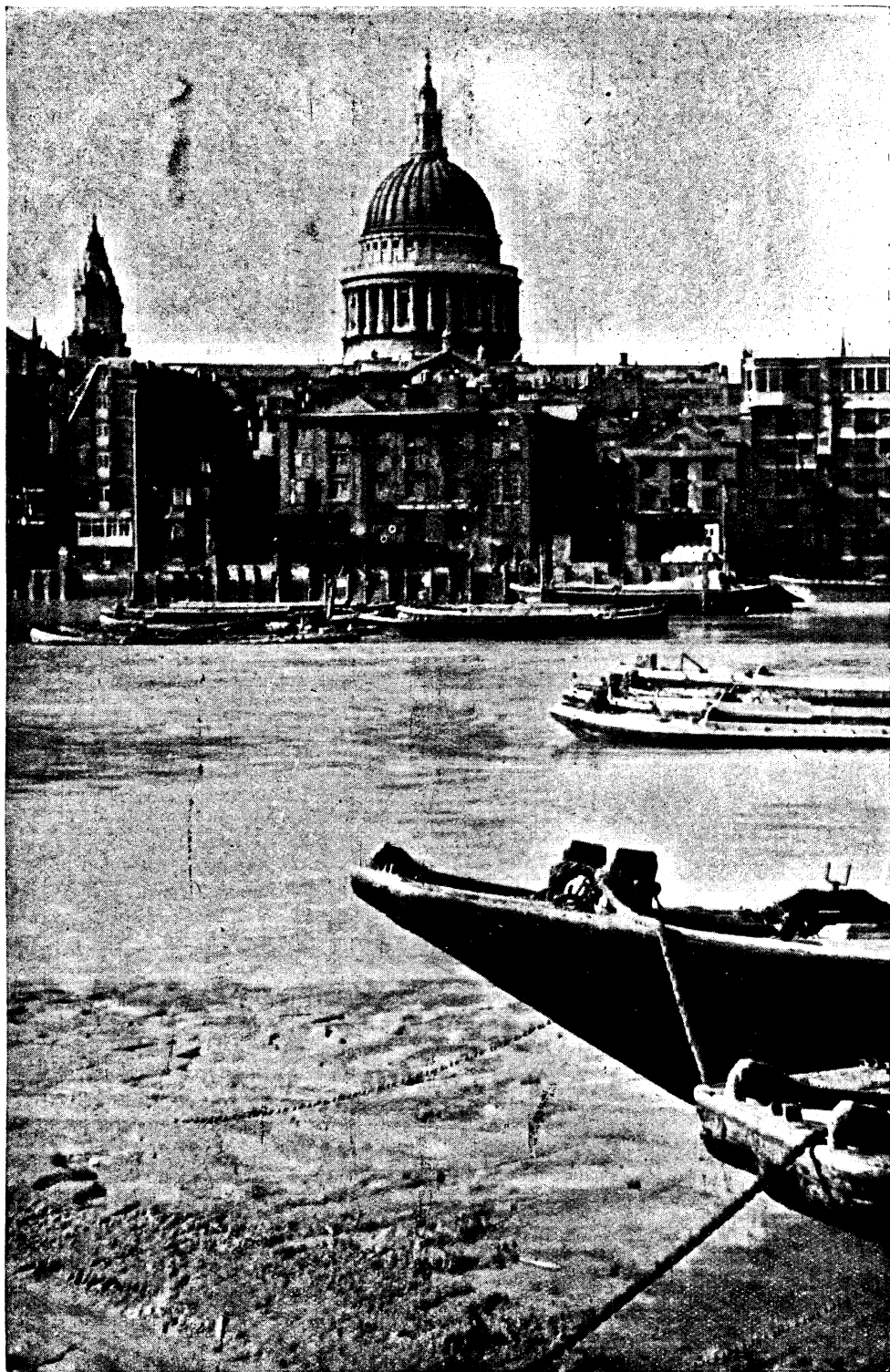
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THE BICENTENARY OF SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN: ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL VIEWED
FROM BANKSIDE.

Photograph by Will F. Taylor. See article on page 123.



“ ‘What I say is, act as big as you can, and sometimes you’ll come out bigger than you’d expect.’ ”

THE KING’S DAY OFF

By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

ORDINARY people are better off than kings. They have only one ruler, and a king has several.

The King of Contendia had three—although it was only a small kingdom—his Private Secretary, his Prime Minister, and his Queen. The Secretary’s rule was unobtrusive. The Prime Minister excused his by “the principles of the constitution.” The Queen simply exercised hers. It was constitutional—to her!

The King saw nothing wrong in this arrangement until the question of a new uniform for the army came under consideration. Then he found his three leaders pulling three different ways. The King’s private feeling was most in favour of the Secretary’s views, and least in favour of those of his royal consort; but he was more afraid of the Prime Minister than of the Secretary, and more afraid of the Queen

than of the Prime Minister. That exactly balanced things, and left the King in equilibrium, until all three joined forces to tell him that the question must be settled, and *he* must settle it.

“You are the Sovereign, sir,” the Secretary said respectfully, “and it is for you to decide. I venture to suggest that Her Majesty is governed by æsthetic considerations, and his lordship by financial considerations, whereas the fundamental considerations are military. As an old soldier—”

“I know,” said the King, “I know.”

“In the last resort,” the Prime Minister stated deferentially, “under the principles of the constitution”—the King sighed—“we come to the personal decision of the monarch, aided by the advice of his constitutional advisers. It is a matter which no lady—not even your talented consort—can

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properly judge, and upon which a soldier is naturally prejudiced. As the mouthpiece of your subjects—?”

“I know,” said the King, “I know.”

“Be a man,” the Queen told him, with the usual amount of wifely reverence, “and decide for yourself. I have told you what to do.”

“I know,” said the King again, “I know.”

He gave personal thought to the matter, and decided to offer a compromise which should satisfy all three of his rulers, giving the colour and material to the Secretary, the number of suits to the Prime Minister, and the buttons and other trimmings to the Queen; but this only put all three against him. He dared not be angry with the Prime Minister or the Queen. So, after the meeting, he was angry with the Secretary.

The Secretary disarmed him by being reproved unresistingly, and then took the opportunity further to urge his views (which were in favour of two uniforms).

“You know, sir,” he protested, “you can’t alter facts. No single uniform can be suitable for all the purposes of a soldier. Peace is different from war, as you well know.”

“No, I don’t,” the King snapped. “They wouldn’t let me go and fight.” It was his standing grievance that he was not allowed to lead the Contendian Army in the Great War. For though he was a quiet and peaceful little man, he was a brave one.

“If Your Majesty will take it from me,” the Secretary declared, “a soldier’s work is as varied as—life.”

“And that’s infernally monotonous!” the King cried. “Bowling and bowling, and signing and signing. How many things did I put my signature to this morning?”

“One hundred and thirty-seven, Your Majesty, and forty-two initials.”

“For variety,” the King observed grimly. “Look here, Verodala, I’m sick of the royal treadmill. I’m going to have a day off.”

“But, sir—”

“Don’t argue with me!” the King thundered. “I don’t care what you say, or the Prime Minister, either.”

“No, sir,” the Secretary agreed. “I wasn’t thinking of us.”

He looked at the King, and the King looked at him.

“You were thinking of motoring with Her Majesty, perhaps?” the Secretary suggested.

“Don’t be a fool!” the King snapped.

“I said a day off. And if I say a thing—It is *I* who am the Sovereign. The Queen is only—had better not know anything about it.”

“Her Majesty,” the Secretary observed, “generally finds out about things. She has the royal gift of penetration. Perhaps, if Dr. Sonada suggested a day’s mountain climbing?”

The King nodded. Her Majesty was growing a trifle stout, and so was unlikely to wish to join in mountaineering.

“I will speak to the doctor,” the Secretary said briskly, “and arrange about the guides and the luncheon and—”

“Wait, wait!” the King cried. “The climbing is to be prescribed, not to be—er—climbed. It is merely a—er—an explanation, to avoid any anxiety to our royal consort.”

“Exactly,” the Secretary agreed, “exactly! And what would Your Majesty wish me to arrange?”

“Nothing,” said the King. “I am going to have a day off—a day ‘on my own.’ That’s the phrase, isn’t it?”

“Er—yes, Your Majesty. You mean that we will not have the court photographer, or reporters, or cinema people? We might—”

“There’s no ‘we,’” the King said firmly. “We are going to be I. Me! You understand?”

“But, Your Majesty”—the Secretary raised his hands in horror—“you can’t—I don’t know quite what is in your Majesty’s mind, but—”

“Why should you?” the King demanded. “I don’t ask what you do in your spare time, do I? Or where the servants go on their evenings out? I’ll tell you what you can do, Verodala. Motor me ten miles out, at six to-morrow morning, and fetch me at six to-morrow evening. The time between is my day off.”

No argument could move the King from this position.

That was how it came to pass that, early on a windy June morning, the King, dressed in the least new clothes which he could find, was walking alone down a country road, swinging a stick and trying to whistle, an accomplishment which he had always envied and never been able to acquire, though he and his brother (now Field-Marshal and Commander-in-Chief of the Forces) had practised it surreptitiously when they played at being beggar boys. His royal mother caught them once and spanked them with her own royal hand, he remembered.

"Was that for trying to whistle? Or was it for trying to turn a somersault?" he pondered. "Carlos *did* turn over once without getting his head on the ground, but I never managed it. Well, I'm too old now, but I feel like it! I wonder whether the lower orders ever turn somersaults in later life? It would be interesting to know that, and how they live and look at things—possibly even instructive. The steam-engine came from watching a kettle. I was never allowed in the kitchen, or I might have invented something. . . . Yes, I must mix with the people. In these old things I shall pass for one of themselves—say, a tramp!"

The King did not know what a tramp was exactly, but he believed that he was the least subject to rule of all persons in those grades of society which did not come to court, and therefore the most likely to be instructive—the tea-kettle of a royal inventor.

He paused and leaned on a gate to watch a horse caught for the day's duties, and presently a buxom milkmaid came over the field with a dozen cows, which she was taking to the farm to milk. "Come up, Jeannette! Now, Marygold! Steady, Flora!" The King opened the gate for her.

"Good morning, my dear," he said.

The girl dropped a curtsy nearly to the ground.

"Good morning, my lord!" said she.

"Eh?" said the King. "What? I'm not a lord. I'm—er—a tramp, you know!"

The girl laughed at him over her shoulder, and he heard her laugh again as she walked on.

"I suspect," he decided, "that the clothes are not old enough, though I must have worn them at least four or five times. I suppose *that* is a tramp."

He turned to a slouching young rustic who was coming along the lane.

"Excuse me," he asked politely, "but are you a tramp?"

The rustic stopped and looked him up and down.

"Are you a loony," he inquired, "or asking to have your blooming head knocked off? Or what? What d'yer mean by calling me names? Eh?"

"I am new to these parts," the King apologised. "We don't have tramps where I come from."

"You're lucky," said the rustic. "Well, if you mean it for a civil question, mister, a tramp is a chap that never does no work and

never won't, and takes whatever he can lay hands on; and if you come across one, mind as he don't take them beautiful clothes of yours! His'll be what some scarecrow has left off!"

He walked on, and the King stroked his chin and considered.

"I gather," he concluded, "that a tramp's apparel is even worse than that young man's. I shall never reach the hearts of the people unless I first assume their exterior appearance."

So he crawled through bushes, and rolled in some dust, and rubbed earth on any clean places which remained, and kicked his soft hat along the road (he had always wished they would let him play football) until he considered his appearance sufficiently trampy. Then he trudged along again, lustily trying to whistle, till he reached a farm.

He found that his disguise was now satisfactory. The farmer threatened to set the dogs on him if he did not depart. He was departing, laughing at the success of his disguise, when the farmer's wife called him back.

"Here!" she said. "Are you hungry?"

"Er—yes, madam," the King declared. A tramp, he reflected, probably would be.

"Hungry enough to do some work for a breakfast?" she asked.

The King considered, and decided that it would be interesting to learn what work was like.

"Yes, madam," he said, "if it will not occupy too long."

"It won't," she told him, "if you put your back into it. Here, Annette, take the man into the kitchen and give him enough to eat, and make him brush himself."

Luckily the girl did not insist upon the brushing, so the King was able to preserve his disguise. He ate a good breakfast of fat pork and dark-coloured bread, and drank tea swamped with new milk. Then he went to his task, which was to carry a number of faggots into a store. He enjoyed it immensely—never having been privileged to do anything of the kind before—and worked so well that the good woman gave him a franc when he was going. (He has the franc still.)

"If you're round here any time," she said, "and feel like a job, you come to *me*. I'll see that my good man gives you one."

"And she will," the maid told him.

"Don't you waste time on the guy'nor. He's under the overseer's thumb and

Hence the first note in the little book which the King carried that day.

The lower orders govern their households in the same way as the King governs the State.

After looking at this for some time, he added a second note--



"The guard looked at the King."

Work and recreation are really the same thing. It is work when you have to do it, and recreation when you haven't.

He walked on for some way, whistling again, until he neared a village. There he met the padre, a portly and benevolent-looking old gentleman, who stopped him.

Stefan's, who keeps the accounts. But the missus is too much for the three of them!"

"Excuse me," the padre said, "but do you know what you are whistling?"

"Yes," said the King. "You recognised it, eh? That's surprising."

He rubbed his hands with delight to find that he was acquiring the art of whistling.

"It certainly surprised me," the padre confessed, "to find a—shall we say a gentleman of the road—"

"Certainly," the King agreed. "Certainly."

He rubbed his hands again. The disguise was evidently satisfactory.

"A gentleman of the road whistling the Prize Song from the 'Meistersingers.' It suggested to me that you were an educated man who—pardon me—had come down."

"Don't mention it," said the King. He decided mentally that he must try to think of something more vulgar to whistle, something that he had heard at a music-hall, perhaps; but he had only been to such a place four times, twice officially and twice unofficially (with Verodala). Unfortunately the Queen had heard of the last visit. That was what made it the last.

"It occurred to me," the padre continued, "that possibly there might be some way in which I could give you a help up. It is what we are all in the world for, from king to peasant, or tramp even, working the same plan in different material and judged by the workmanship. Only, friend, a man should choose the best material that he can get; it permits finer work. For example"—he smiled through his spectacles—"a violin can render the delicacies of the Prize Song better than a whistle. A peasant governs his home, and the King—God bless him!—governs the kingdom."

"He doesn't," the King stated feelingly. "At least, other people govern him."

"As other people govern the head of a house in a way," the padre said. "For example, my niece—she keeps house for me—turns me round her little finger in hundreds of things. But when you come to the big point, friend, the head of the house is the head of the house. And the King is the King! . . . Well, he should be!"



"What's the matter, officer?" he asked."

"Ah," said the King, "perhaps you don't know many court officials, and prime ministers, and queens—especially queens!"

"Many queens," the padre asserted. "Every woman is a queen to one man, and in her heart she wishes him to be king of her, I think. But women are not very easy to understand."

"I have noticed that," the King observed. "Yes, yes. . . . But about the question of one's lot in life. That is what you are driving at. Now, I was thinking that the finer the material, the greater the worry. A tramp has more happiness and more freedom than a king. For one thing, he needn't be married. A king practically must be."

"What do you reckon as happiness?" the padre asked. "Have you forgotten the happiness of duty well done? What do you mean by freedom? Is he unfree who is

bond-slave to goodness? My dear friend"—he laid his white hand on the King's shoulder—"we can make a lot of controversy about right and wrong, but in our hearts we always know which is which. Obviously you are not in your rightful sphere—the sphere of duty in which God placed you. Is it impossible for you to get back to it?"

"No," the King owned, "I can get back there."

"Can I help you to do so?"

"No," said the King again.

"Then——" The old gentleman touched his arm again.

"I think," the King said, "you *have* made it easier. God bless you, sir. You will see me again, not as a tramp."

"Good!" The padre beamed. "Very good! Excellent! Now, perhaps a little monetary help might be—er—just a temporary assistance, eh?"

"Thank you," the King acknowledged, "but I assure you it is unnecessary. I would like just a card with your name and address—something to remember a friend by."

"The Padre of Beneventa," the good man said. "That's equal to name and address; but as a memento——" He fumbled in his pocket and pulled out a little gold pencil-case, and wrote on the back of his card—

If you're a king, be a good king.

If you're a priest, be a good priest.

If you're a master, be a good master.

If you're a servant, be a good servant.

Anyhow, be as good as you can.

"There," he said, "that's what I preach to others, and fall short of, but I try to live up to it. Good luck, my friend!"

He held out his hand. The King grasped it.

When the King had left the good padre, he put the card in his notebook. He made another entry in that, and underlined it—

To shake hands with a good man is an honour to the King.

"I am learning a great deal to-day," he told himself, "but it doesn't solve the question of the uniform. I must think that out."

As it was warm, he sat down under a hedge to think, and thought himself asleep. When he woke, he fancied that he had slept for a good while; but when he was going to look at his watch, he found none. It had been unhooked from the chain and taken.

"Ha, ha!" he said. "If you're a thief, be a good thief! I wonder what my friend the padre would say to that!" He laughed

at his joke. "If I weren't a king," he vowed, "I believe I might have been a humorist! What fun I could have made of the royal speeches! Well, well, a sense of humour is a great thing in a king. It helps him to avoid it. Ha, ha!"

He walked along a little further and heard angry voices, two women speaking shrilly and excitedly, and a man speaking quietly but obstinately. As he rounded a bend, he saw a big young police-guard talking to two gipsy women, a wicked-looking, shrivelled crone and a full-blooded, handsome wench with flashing eyes.

"You must give it to me," the guard said.

"I won't!" cried the girl. "It's more mine'n yourn. Picked it up, I tell you."

"Then I've got to take you to the guard-house," the guard said.

"What's the colour of her eyes, dearie?" the crone asked him. "Make a nice lady's watch, a little 'un like that! To the guard-house! Ha, ha! 'Tain't there you'll take it!"

"You'll see it go there and be handed over all right," the man told her. "You're coming with me, the pair of you. Picked it up, indeed! You tell that to the sergeant! If you ask me, you'll both see the inside of one of His Majesty's prisons."

"It's all the hospitality he provides," the crone raved, "ain't it? It's fine to be a king! Lives on the people, sucks the life out of 'em. And a palace for him, and for them—His Majesty's prisons! And His Majesty's police-guards! And His Majesty's police-guards' gals, what gets what he robs a poor homeless gipsy of! You swine!"

"That'll do, mother," the guard advised. "Best come along quiet."

"She didn't have it!" the girl cried. "Don't you touch her, or I'll knife you! Look here, you let grandmother be, and I'll come quiet. You wouldn't be hard on a poor gal, ducky?"

She sidled up to him, and suddenly her right arm darted out.

"No, you don't!" The guard grabbed her arm. "*Thought* you'd got a knife there! Now, look here, my gal. I don't want to be hard on no woman, but I've got my duty to do. Come along quiet, and I'll say nothing about what you tried to do to *me*. That's my affair. This other's the law's, and I've got my duty to do."

The King nodded approvingly. The guard was a good guard.

"What's the matter, officer?" he asked.

"Not making a trouble about my watch,

are you? I gave it to these poor people. I wanted to do something for them, and found I'd left my money at home. I've been hunting for birds' eggs, and got a bit dirty, eh?"

The guard looked at the King—who stood holding out his watchless chain—and pursed his lips.

"Well, you *have*, sir," he said; "in fact, if it weren't for your way of speaking—However, I know a gentleman. But it's a funny story, sir."

"It is," the King agreed, "isn't it? If I told you the whole, you'd think it funnier."

"She said she picked it up," the guard remarked, kicking at the ground.

"She knew you wouldn't believe that anyone had given it to her," the King pointed out. "Sounds unlikely, eh? Unlikely! But there *are* some fools about, guard. Take me for one!"

The guard grinned slowly.

"There are," he agreed. "I know of another. Well, if a chap's folly takes the form of being sporting to a woman, I ain't got nothing much to say against it. Good day, sir. Good day, granny. Luck, Polly!"

"I'm coming a little way with you," the King told him.

When he had parted from the young guard, he stood at the roadside to make another note in his little book.

It is a shame to a king if he provides no guest-houses but prisons.

"Although," he reflected, "I'm afraid the old woman was a bad lot, and that black-eyed young hussy—Not good! She ought to feel sorry for what she's done. But she's probably laughing at me for a soft fool."

Then suddenly there was a rustle in the hedge behind him, and someone said "Here!" and something hard was pushed into his hand. By the time that he had recognised his watch, the hedge was closing again, and he saw a red handkerchief, and occasionally some black hair that escaped it, departing hurriedly through the wood.

"Ah," he shouted, "that's excellent! That's capital! Now, you be a good girl, my dear!"

He heard a shaky laugh and then a rather husky voice—

"No fear!"

"But I'm not sure that she meant it," he told himself, "not at all sure. There's more good in people than you think. I shall note that in my book."

He made a fresh note accordingly—

Moral character of lower classes similar to that of high-born. Usually a mixture of good and evil. Either responds to similar characteristic in others. N.B.—You find good unexpectedly sometimes on giving proper occasion. N.B. 2.—Try on Prime Minister.

The recovered watch showed the King that it was past lunch-time. So he set out in search of an inn. On the way, however, he found a waggon the wheel of which had slipped into a ditch. Two carters were struggling to get the vehicle clear by urging the horse and whipping it.

"Here," the King cried, "you'll never do it like that. You're simply making your horse drag it harder into the bank, and frightening the poor thing out of his life. Harness the horse on to the side of the waggon to tilt it back straight, and we'll all lift at the wheel."

The King got down into the ditch—which, luckily, wasn't very damp—and lifted with the men till they extricated the wheel. Then he soothed the horse and helped harness it, and they drove him to the village.

"I never thought a gent had so much use," one of the waggoners complimented him. And the King made a note of this also in his book—

Even a king can be useful.

The landlord of the village inn took his disordered and muddy attire to be due to his "sporting" help with the waggon. So he served him lunch in the parlour, and the King felt more appetite for it than he ever felt for the lunches at the palace. The landlord, he found, was regarded as the sage of the village. So he talked to him after lunch—which the landlord called dinner—with a view to acquiring knowledge of the masses from a reliable source. With royal wisdom he started with a compliment—called his host a wise man.

"Wise?" grunted the landlord. "Not me! And, to my mind, nobody ain't! They just look up to me because I'm a man that puts his foot down. That's how you've got to settle things. You never stand anywhere with your foot in the air. Plunk it down *somewhere*, and there you are! Doesn't matter where very often. You're standing!"

"Ah!" said the King. "Yes, but the trouble is to make other people stand in the same place." He thought of the question of the uniform and sighed. "Now, suppose you had three mothers with a child each, and all three had to be dressed alike—"

"Why should they be?" the landlord wanted to know.

"Well, suppose they *had* to be. Someone might have offered three suits of a pattern, you see."

"I see," the landlord agreed. "All boys or all girls, of course? Otherwise——"

"All boys," the King said; "and you were to choose the colours, and one mother wanted red, and another wanted blue, and another wanted drab. What would you do?"

"Black," said the landlord instantly. "More sensible and serviceable. Shouldn't listen to red or blue, anyhow. Not for a moment. Dark grey I *might*."

"But suppose the mothers had to agree with you before the suits were supplied?"

"No suits till they did," the landlord told him. "That's all!"

"You are a wise man, landlord," the King complimented him.

"Only obstinate," the landlord declared. "For lots of things it serves the same purpose."

Wherefore the King made another note—

The wiser of the lower orders hold that prompt and firm decision is more important than the precise decision arrived at, and that those in authority should be firm in exercising it. N.B.—Try on Adela.

His royal consort's name was Adela. (The King hesitated for a long while and took a deep breath before he wrote it.)

It was four o'clock when the King left the inn, and he had some five miles to travel to the place where the Secretary was to meet him with the motor. So he took a short cut recommended by a rustic, as he had never, all his life, been permitted to take a short cut before.

This particular short cut had a disadvantage. It crossed or, at any rate, the King crossed, the territory of a bull. The bull objected to the King. The King ran. He had never exerted himself so much since he was born. He lost his hat and dropped his stick, and went knee-deep in a ditch to cross it. He did not notice that the bull remained on his own side, but pushed through a prickly hedge, and ran on and on, till at last, in a little lane, he sank exhausted, panting loudly. A big rough man came out from behind a bush and dragged him through a hedge and behind a haystack, and carried him into a sort of burrow which he had made in it, and covered the opening with hay.

"Don't hear no one," he said gruffly.

"I should say you've slipped 'em. Don't try to talk till you've got your breath. I've been in the same boat myself. Hope 'tain't murder, mate; but I don't give you away, not whatever you've done. 'Tain't just pinching a hen, or a rabbit, or an egg or two, that they're after *you* for. Eh, mate?"

"No!" the King gasped. "No! . . . Oh, dear! . . . I must have run several miles." (It was half a mile really.) "I expected to be caught every moment. Even now——" He looked round apprehensively.

"Well," said the tramp—the King took him to be a genuine tramp, because he was the roughest and raggedest and dirtiest person he had ever seen, and one of the biggest—"you're least likely to be took here of anywhere; and if you're to be took, you'll be took. What's to be will be, I always say; and what's the use of worrying? . . . Look here, mate. I don't want to ask no questions, but——" The tramp looked at him curiously. "Ever heard the name of King?"

"What?" the King cried. "You know me?"

"Strike me!" the tramp cried. "Strike me! You're *him*! And there's *fresh* blood on your hands!"

"It must have been getting through the hedge," the King explained. "He was close on me, and if he had caught me—— You see, my friend, it was a matter of life and death. If he should find us here!"

"He won't find *us*," the tramp growled. "I've done what I've done. Enough to judge no man! *But*!"—he shook his great fist—"I haven't come down to be company to the likes of *you*. Just because a woman nags you, you go and do—what you did!"

"But really——" the King protested.

"Shut up!" the tramp growled. "Not another word, or I'll smash your jaw!" He shook his great fist in the King's face. "Listen to me. I'm not going to turn you out. I never gave anybody away yet, and I won't, but I'm going myself."

"But——" the King began. He was still panting a little from his exertions.

The tramp threw him aside roughly, and was out from the haystack and through the hedge before the King could think what to say. Then he, too, got out and shouted.

"The bull!" he called. "Look out for the bull!"

The tramp stopped as if he had been shot, turned and looked over the hedge.

"Bull?" he asked. "What bull?"

"The one that chased me!" the King explained.

The tramp roared and slapped his leg.

"Blimey!" he cried. "I thought it was the police. Natural thing to suppose!"

"If you've any reason to run away from them," the King said. "I haven't."

"Come, come, mate," the tramp said. "It's no use expecting me to believe *that*; but now you're standing up I see you ain't the bloke. You don't run to more than five foot six, and by the description he's five nine."

"Who?" the King asked.

"Well," said the tramp apologetically, "I was thinking of Johan King, that they're after."

"What for?" the King wanted to know.

"Done his wife in," said the tramp. "I dessay she had a tongue, and you may think me mighty pertickler, but——" He shook his rough head. "Going too far, I call it—too far! Of course, any chap beats his wife sometimes——"

"Oh!" cried the King. "Indeed no! Certainly I never have."

"How can you manage her, then?" the tramp wanted to know.

"I—er—can't," the King owned.

"There you are!" said the tramp.

An interesting discussion followed, the King holding that personal chastisement of wives was undesirable, and, at any rate, in the case of wives of the present-day upper class, out of the question, and the tramp urging that these most of all required it, "being hardest to hold in," though he admitted difficulties in applying his principles in cases of wives who were large and stronger than their husbands.

"Of course," he said, "there's a difference between a big man and a little one. What I say is, act as big as you can, and sometimes you'll come out bigger than you'd expect."

"That, my friend," said the King, "is one of the finest pieces of philosophy that I have ever heard. I shall make it my motto in future."

He wrote it down verbatim in his little book—

Philosophy of tramp: act as big as you can, and sometimes you'll come out bigger than you'd expect. N.B.—Applies to all classes, including kings. Shall try it.

The tramp piloted the King to his rendezvous. The King persuaded the tramp to accept sundry portraits of himself (stamped

on coins), which the tramp did not recognise. They shook hands warmly on parting.

"A most interesting man, Verodala," the King pronounced, as they drove away. "A singularly interesting man, with almost knightly instincts. Particularly acute views on social questions. As a soldier you would appreciate his views upon the maintenance of discipline in domestic establishments. It appears that tramps are very strict with their wives."

"Ah!" said the Secretary. "Perhaps Your Majesty would like to put on this large driving coat? If the Queen should catch sight of you in your present attire——"

"It would merely precipitate what I have to say to Her Majesty," the King observed calmly. He sat back and folded his arms.

"I can't make out what has happened to His Majesty," the Secretary said, when he 'phoned to the Prime Minister that the King wished to see him immediately after dinner. "He seems a new man!"

That was what all three of his rulers thought when he spoke to them after dinner, for instead of asking for instructions he gave them.

He instructed the Prime Minister to have a scheme worked out for "King's Hostels" for the deserving poor of the realm—and especially tramps and gipsies—when travelling. "It is disgraceful," he declared, "that the King's only hospitality to his subjects should take the form of prisons. We must alter that."

He instructed the Secretary to arrange for a visit to the estimable Padre of Beneventa early in the next week. "You can take a selection of decorations," he said, "though I doubt if he will care for any."

He instructed the Queen that he should like her to accompany him. "He knows a number of queens," he remarked, "women who are queens to their husbands. So I should like him to meet one who is a double queen."

The King bowed, not insincerely. In his heart he was very proud of his handsome and regal wife.

"Now," he said, "there is this question of the uniforms. I have carefully considered the main points, and have arrived at a decision. You should be able to come to agreement upon the details."

He delivered his decision, which was, upon the whole, in favour of the military view.

"And that is all," he concluded. "I wish the arrangements carried out rapidly."

The Secretary and the Prime Minister bowed and went out. The Queen sat and stared at the King. The King pulled himself together, and wished that he were six feet ten. Anyhow, he told himself, he was going to try to feel like it.

"Well!" Her Majesty cried at last. "Well! It is quite opposed to my views, and I'm sure you are wrong. But—you acted like a big man."

The King jumped up and walked over to his royal consort and put his hand on her shoulder.

"Help me to be one," he proposed. "Adela, let us do things together and be as big as we can."

"Yes," said the Queen. "Yes. It should give each of us the bigness of two."

"I shall make a note of that," he told her.

So it came to pass that the King made an entry at the end of the wisdom which his people had taught him upon his day off, a great discovery which he meant to teach to them—

When a man and woman are one, each has the greatness of two.

Which is the final moral, if a story may have morals, of this queer little fancy of the King's day off. At least, the King and the Queen and the other people are fancies. The morals are real enough to apply to you and me.



WINDY MOONLIGHT.

THE wild winds quarrelled with the moon;
 She only smiled resplendently,
 And drew a veil of fleecy cloud
 Between her and their tyranny,

Against the windows of my sleep
 I heard their snarling thunders break;
 Yet through the self-same panes I saw
 The moon to cloudless conquest wake.

Beyond the barred and shuttered heart
 Storms may not enter nor abide,
 While through high dreams kept crystal-clear
 The moons of God serenely ride.

ETHEL M. HEWITT.

TRANSPORT AND ITS PRESENT-DAY PROBLEMS

THE FUTURE OF OUR HIGHWAYS, RAILWAYS AND TRAMWAYS

By S. L. BENSUSAN and J. FRANCIS

TRANSPORT has been described as the "life-blood" of commerce and industry. In all busy manufacturing and trading countries, however, transport equipment in its various forms has developed piecemeal, so that it necessarily includes many weak links, certain links are missing altogether, and in some instances several links have been provided where a lesser number would suffice. Indeed, even if newly devised, it is hardly possible to conceive of a system which would or could meet every requirement with equal satisfaction, in view of the enormous number and variety of factors to be correlated. And where, as is the case in the British Isles, the more primitive forms of transport were established according to the conditions of several centuries ago, while development since has occurred largely in response to local conditions and requirements, and with little or no regard to corresponding progress or circumstances elsewhere, it is not surprising that the result has been far from satisfactory in detail, although the demands of transport as a whole, and particularly in respect of the more outstanding features, may appear to have been very well met.

It is necessary to lay stress upon the vital difference between a transport system which satisfies requirements only where large issues are concerned, and one which meets with equal approval in reference to smaller and incidental matters. It is beyond question that Great Britain has a railway system which for completeness of facilities is probably unequalled even in countries which utilised our pioneer experience to avoid early errors, and have consequently developed under more favourable conditions. Our coastal and ocean shipping trade is, in many respects, a model to the

world, notwithstanding that it has many admitted imperfections. Mechanical road transport, too, is probably more complex and complete than in any other land, except, perhaps, in the United States, and then only in regard to the more densely populated areas. Canals are somewhat in disrepute, it is true, but we were pioneers in that connection, and we have no great rivers corresponding with those of the Continent and America, whose presence has largely induced the widespread use of canals either as connecting links or, in Germany and other countries, operating in conjunction with the large waterways. Aviation, too, owes a great deal to British enterprise.

It is, however, in detail and in effective co-ordination that transport as a whole is seriously deficient, rather than in the broad issues of the main transport question. This was becoming apparent several years before the Great War, and especially in view of the growing vogue of the motor road vehicle. But the war years introduced new conditions and requirements, emphasising, it is true, many good points, but also directing attention to various weaknesses and deficiencies. Indeed, soon after the outbreak of the world war in 1914, the Government of the day found itself faced by grave difficulties in carrying on the vital work of transport.

Our railway system was nearly one hundred years old; it had grown up in a certain haphazard fashion and without control from the days when the first forerunner of our elaborate modern system was merely a line of rails over which any carrier had a right to send his trucks on payment of due charges. We all have read something of the history of railways in this country, and we know more or less how they grew.

When the War started, there were over one hundred companies in Great Britain, a large proportion functioning on systems of their own. All the great companies had their own repair shops, and each had its separate practice in regard to design of engines, rolling stock, machinery, etc., extending to almost every detail of construction.

Government control of the companies solved some of the problems, but it revealed an amount of overlapping and a measure of waste that startled and alarmed those who, for the first time, saw the real nakedness of our system. A further survey of prevailing conditions showed that the country, despite the competence of our leading railway companies, was, in truth, ill served. Railways had not been created to serve national needs, but to deal with what almost might be called local interests. The conditions under which they were brought into the Metropolis had been entirely unregulated, with the results that we see to-day, when some of our termini are inconveniently situated and surrounded by slums. Competition between the railways had been checked to some extent by amalgamation and by "working arrangements," but these had seldom been designed to benefit the public, and it was clear that, in view of increased working expenses and the necessity for higher charges, railways would speedily become bankrupt if some better system of handling were not devised.

Turning from the rail to the road, it was found there, too, that the position was most unsatisfactory. Although the control of our roads by local authorities had met with considerable success, the roads themselves were not constructed to meet the new demands, and motor traffic had introduced conditions that were unthinkable only half a century ago. Our tramway systems were working under very grave disadvantages. Canals, waterways, and inland navigation stood neglected. It was necessary to raise the dues at harbours, docks, and piers, and it was abundantly clear that, if order was to be evolved out of chaos, transport must be considered as a whole, and no longer as a series of unrelated parts.

In connection with roads, we are brought up against one of the most interesting stories of our island development. We know that when the Romans came here, they drove their roads straight across the country, urged by no other than military considerations. The early English kings made the people of each locality keep their roads and

bridges in repair. It was one of the obligations of the feudal landowner, part of the price he paid for his many privileges. Roads being few, they were crowded, and we have only to turn to Chaucer and Piers Plowman to catch a glimpse of the merchants, pilgrims, Crusaders, beggars and thieves who thronged our highways. When the Black Plague swept this country, the upkeep failed, and the conditions became deplorable, so that in the "spacious days of great Elizabeth" an Act was passed making each parish responsible for its roads, and giving the local surveyor of highways power to send all the inhabitants to work on the roads under his supervision for six days in the year. This statute labour was in force only one hundred years ago. Wheeled vehicles came in at the end of the sixteenth century; hackney carriages were seen in London for the first time about 1634, and post-chaises thirty years after, coaches with springs appearing a century after that. Roads were not made or used in those days as they are now. They were crowded with droves of cattle for the Metropolis, and legions of poultry, with pack-horses that brought every type of product, from fish to coal; in rough weather travelling must have been very unpleasant. Turnpikes belonged to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and were supervised by countless trusts; and when transport woke up—about the time of the Napoleonic wars—and we had public coaches and a postal service, as well as a growing trade, the road problem grew worse than ever. Then Macadam revolutionised our turnpike roads by the use of the material that carries his name to this day. Eighty years ago we had upwards of 20,000 miles of turnpike roads in this country, and over 100,000 miles under parochial control. With the coming of the railways, roads became insolvent—that is to say, the trusts that administered them were broken. Many main roads returned to the parish, and the hatred of tolls brought about the famous "Rebecca Riots" of 1842-43. It was only in 1888, when main roads were placed, by the Local Government Act, under the newly created County Councils, that the position became tolerable. By that time the herds of cattle were travelling in railway wagons, the pack-horse was dead, the post-chaise and the stage coach were rotting in forgotten stables with the old family barouche in which the landlord went to town for the season.

The bicycle followed, to the derision

of those who looked upon it as a low and plebeian form of transport, and following the cycles came the motorist, who was popularly supposed to ride roughshod over pedestrians, children, poultry, and domestic pets, while burying every house and garden in dust. The "road hog," as he was so kindly christened, had another story to tell—a story of narrow, winding, and irregular roads, with horrible gradients, bad foundations and impossible surfaces. At last, only five years before the War, the Government appointed the Road Board, and taxed petrol for the general good of the

possible advantage, the roads of this country have been classified under two headings—arterial roads and other roads. The former have been divided into two classes, the first containing all the main trunk roads over which there is a considerable amount of traffic—the Brighton road is a good example. Class II. contains the lesser trunk roads. Local authorities are responsible for the maintenance of arterial roads, but may submit schemes to the Ministry of Transport—of which more in due course—and, if these are approved, will receive grants up to half the total cost in the case of Class I.

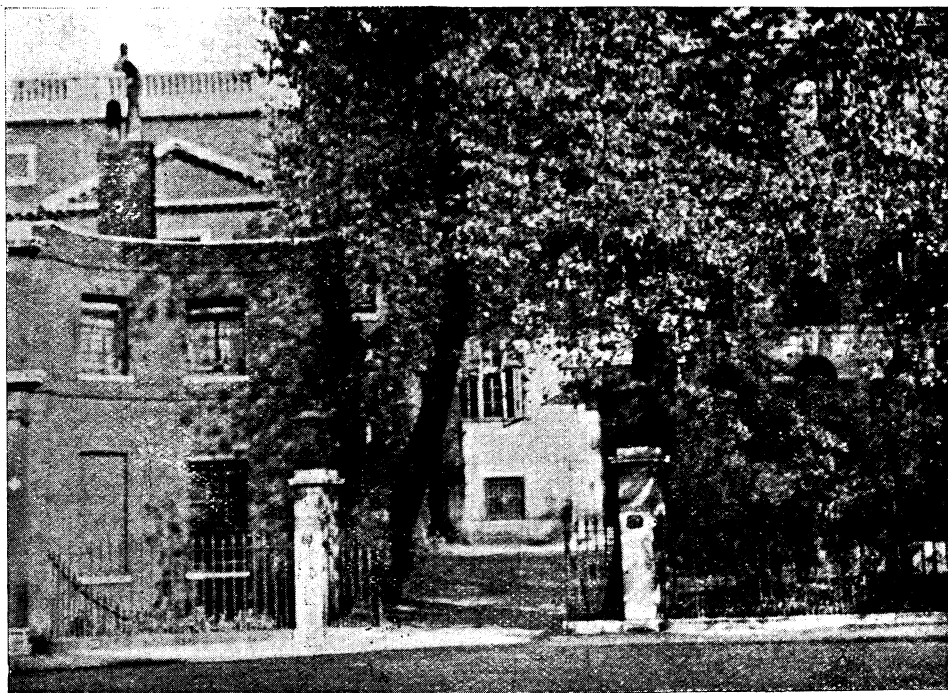


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[Clarke & Hyde.]

THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, WHITEHALL GARDENS.

community. Its powers were confined to new road improvements—maintenance was not included—and then, to add to problems that had never been properly solved, came the motor-omnibus and the motor char-a-banc. Only in 1920 was this latest and most serious problem handled by the Government, which imposed a tax on motor-cars for the upkeep of the roads, and by so doing acquired some £9,000,000 a year to spend on this service. The Roads Act of 1920 created a fund that receives its revenue from motor taxation, and in order that it may be used to the best

roads and up to a quarter of the total cost in the case of Class II. roads. A large part of the Road Fund is used for improvement purposes, and, presuming about £9,000,000 a year to be the revenue, about £6,500,000 is allocated to maintenance and the balance to new construction.

It will therefore be seen that transport had manifested its problems in many different ways, each section having its own peculiar difficulties, though in some degree all were related. It was not sufficient to find a solution for the railway problem, acute though that had become; in addition,

tramways, docks, canals, and roads required corresponding attention. In fact, there was not only need for developing each in its own field, but, perhaps even more importantly, great need for correlating all these transport agencies, co-ordinating them as complementary and supplementary one of the other, and for ruling out competitive aspects altogether.

It was, however, the railway problem which was most urgent, and the need for a solution of this undoubtedly had a strong influence upon the measures undertaken. These culminated in the establishment of a Ministry of Transport, concerned with all forms of public service transport within the limits of Great Britain.

Many of the difficulties and anomalies of the position had, however, been recognised for many years. Indeed, for seventy years Parliament had been agitating for control of transport. One Committee after another had sat and reported, one Bill after another had been presented to the House, but the interests of the monopolists were always strong enough to stand in the

way of any definite measure of State control.

To add to the complications, the Government found themselves face to face with two schools of thought in the country. There was a large and growing body that supported nationalisation of railways, and believed that it is the business of the Government to take over transport in the interests of the nation. The cost of acquisition, modernised equipment and working, was not allowed to stand in the way of this theory. On the other side were those who believe in private enterprise, and hold very strongly that Government interference is radically bad, that it is only the individual prepared to take risks who can face modern conditions, and that administration of an official kind is fatal to enterprise. Very naturally the Government hesitated and weighed the pros and cons of both theories before finding safe'y in the middle way, introducing a Bill providing for a Ministry of Ways and Communications, which eventually emerged as the Transport Act, 1919, establishing the Ministry of Transport.

II.

THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND ITS WORK, 1919-1923.

This Ministry, one of the most-discussed and best-abused of the newer Government Departments, was brought into being in August, 1919, and operated as from September 23, 1919. The Ministry was given all powers and duties of any Government Department in relation to railways, light railways, tramways, canals, waterways, inland navigations, roads, bridges and ferries, with their vehicles and traffic, harbours, docks, and piers. Certain of the powers belonging to the Home Office, the Board of Trade, and the Ministry of Health were retained by these Departments, but, broadly speaking, the new Ministry held transport in its hands; and with the Ministry went the Road Board, charged to deal with road construction, improvement, maintenance, and development. To a certain extent the electrical development of the country came also under the Ministry's survey, because the Electricity Commissioners report to the Minister.

Sir Eric Geddes, who was appointed to take charge of transport, had had since the War a meteoric career. One of the most capable of the higher officials of the North Eastern Railway, he busied himself in the early days of the War in raising regiments for the Army. Stories of his capacity spread to Whitehall, and before the War was far advanced he was one of Mr. Lloyd George's right-hand men at the Ministry of Munitions, where his boundless energy helped in those great developments of which one of the earliest results was that it became necessary to send him overseas to reorganise transport in France—a task he accomplished with complete success. Then came questions of naval organisation, and it was deemed necessary to invite this man—who was already a Major-General in the Army—to Whitehall, where he was for a time a successful First Lord of the Admiralty. So soon as the question of reorganising transport in these islands came

to the front, it was realised on every hand that there was nobody better fitted for the work. He took over the new Department and filled the high places with experts. Because he collected the finest team that the country could yield, the Ministry was dubbed "grandiose" in many quarters; but results count for more than words, and such references caused little perturbation.

Sir Alexander Gibb became Director-General of Civil Engineering; Sir C. de

in work connected directly or indirectly with transport. They brought trained minds to the task, and certainly theirs was a labour from which Hercules himself might have shrunk. Not only were they face to face with chaos, and not only were many transport undertakings on the verge of bankruptcy, but there were many private interests to be considered, and much opposition to be overcome. Add to this the grave financial stringency, the public fear that all enterprise was untimely, and that it was better to muddle on until good times came again, and some extent of the magnitude of the problem may be gathered. But those concerned with the new transport were firmly convinced that if this country was to make up its losses and resume its position, existing methods must be scrapped, because they could no longer be effective.

So long as the Government control of railways continued—until August 15, 1921—the Ministry of Transport was the responsible Government Department, and it still has certain claims upon the railway companies. One of the responsibilities of the Transport Ministry was that of preparing a scheme for the future of the home railways, and this was foreshadowed in a White Paper issued in June, 1920, of which a salient feature was the proposal for grouping the hundred or so British railway companies into six groups. In Parliament the number of groups was reduced to four, and certain other modifications were made. As a result, nearly all the railways are combined into four grouped companies, and slowly but surely

an effort will be made to bring about standardisation, and so reduce expenses that were unavoidable under the old régime. The number of railway directors is reduced, high officials row control wider areas than before, engine parts are being standardised so far as is possible, superfluous and out-of-date repairing shops will be abolished, and much costly competition will become a thing of the past, though, rather curiously, a large number of



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[Russell.

THE RT. HON. SIR ERIC GEDDES, G.C.B., K.C.B., G.B.E.,

Who was the first Minister of Transport.

Bartolomé, Director-General of Development; Sir Philip Nash was placed in charge of traffic; Sir George Beharrell took over Finance and Statistics; Sir William Marwood was made responsible for Public Safety; Sir Henry Maybury was appointed Director of Roads; the Chief Mechanical Engineer was Sir John Aspinall, and the head of the Electricity Commission was Sir John Snell.

These men had already achieved success

competitive possibilities still remain, as between groups instead of between individual railway companies.

The system under which the railways work is an equitable one enough. The first charge upon profits will be for a return to shareholders based upon the year 1913, which was a good one for their business. After that, and payment of interest on capital not yet productive, the companies will be entitled to 20 per cent. of their extra profits, while 80 per cent. must go to the reduction of the charges for conveying goods and passengers. A Railway Rates Tribunal will settle what price goods must pay, and will bring about a standardised system of rates, exceptional rates, estimated to number many millions, being largely done away with, and only to be quoted under special circumstances and with the approval of the Rates Tribunal. Hitherto the railway companies have been allowed, within certain limits that are strictly defined, to make what charges they please for goods; but in future the Rates Tribunal will control these charges, and this is the more necessary, as in certain cases the price of transport must remain high, and it is important that experts should be in a position to say when and where the fair limits of increase have been reached. Light railways are to be encouraged in order to open up many of those rural areas that suffer to-day from lack of adequate transport, and are unable to send the food they produce at a reasonable price to the people waiting to consume it.

It is well to remember that many of the economies that can be effected in the future will be due to the removal of duplication and to the progress of standardisation. This aspect is more fully dealt with in the next section, but it will be sufficient to mention the fact that each railway company has hitherto had its own locomotive designs — frequently differing down to appliances and small details from the corresponding

methods of every other company—that carriages and wagons differ almost as widely, and that record-keeping and office methods vary considerably.

Another important aid to transport which also came under the control of the Ministry was our tramway system. Some of our tramways are owned privately and some by corporations, and by that date they were faced by a decline in money values, increased cost of material, and the time lost during the War in replacing stock and fittings. It has been said by a great authority that, while there are nearly three hundred tramway undertakings in this country to-day, the maintenance of pre-War legal charges would bring every one of them into bankruptcy, and



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THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF CRAWFORD, K.T.,

Who in 1922 combined the offices of First Commissioner of Works and Minister of Transport.



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SIR HENRY MAYBURY, K.C.M.G., C.B.,
The Ministry's Director of Roads.

[Russell.

Every dock in our island kingdom is in the same position. Its statutory charging powers have become inadequate. The Ministry here again has stood between the dock-owner and dock user and has seen fair play; the handling of the matter has been expert throughout.

The great work of the Roads Department of the Ministry has been the construction of new roads in and round London and other large cities. The idea has been to limit congestion, and in the course of time to give heavy vehicles a clear run without compelling them to enter the narrow streets of a crowded town merely to get through. New roads have been made and others are in the making, and these have engaged some thousands of unskilled men during the worst period of unemployment. Another business undertaking has been the standardisation of direction posts and warning signs. A Special Committee of the County Surveyors' Society reported on the question, and certain forms of signs have been introduced and recommended. In view of the difficulties that confront new expenditure of any sort, it has been decided, wisely, not to insist upon the erection of these new posts throughout the country, but local authorities have been

but for their right to increase fares there would be no trams on our streets. On the other hand, had the tramways been permitted to make their own charges, it is at least possible that, had there been tramways on our streets, there would have been few passengers in the trams, because those charges would, in many cases, have been prohibitive. As things were rearranged, every company that sought to increase its fares had to present to the Ministry a brief for the prosecution, and it is safe to say that these figures have been examined with the utmost care by experts who know their precise value as a support to the claim. The result is that our tramways continue to run, and the increased charges they have made have been rigidly scrutinised and justified. There has been no profiteering.

asked, when they replace existing signs or propose to put up new ones, to use a standardised and accepted form, so that in a few years the necessary results will be obtained with a minimum of expenditure.

In the year in which the Transport Act came into being we had an Electricity (Supply) Act, which appointed the Electricity Commissioners, with Sir John Snell as chairman, and defined their powers for the reorganisation of the supply of electricity in this country, the erection of generating stations, the amendment of Electric Lighting Acts, and kindred matters. Sir John Snell, the Chief Commissioner, is a Past-President of the Institution of Electrical Engineers and a Member of Council of the Institution of Civil Engineers. He was one of the five Trustees appointed by the

Army Council to form the first Metropolitan Munitions Board in 1915. The vital importance of electric power was realised so soon as the Government went seriously into the business of manufacturing munitions on a gigantic scale. Without the power distributed from public generating stations, it would have been impossible, within the time available, to have made those rapid extensions of war-work factories which were essential. Electrical undertakings, like railway undertakings, had grown haphazard in this country, but fortunately they are much younger and consequently more amenable to discipline. Electricity, on its introduction into this country, was used primarily for purposes of illumination, and its possibilities as a source of power were so neglected that, when the War broke out, the total annual amount of electricity produced in this country was only 2,000,000,000 units per annum. Between 1914 and 1918 it rose to more than 4,500,000,000 units, but there has been no real attempt to gauge the possibilities of the vast power that Nature has placed at our disposal. As with the railways, so with electrical undertakings. In London alone we have nearly one hundred separate electricity authorities, over eighty separate generating stations, employing fifty types of system, ten different frequencies, and twenty-four different pressures. Throughout the United Kingdom we find seven hundred different electricity undertakings, some large and adequate, some small and inadequate, while so far as the full use of electricity goes, this country is still in its infancy. Switzerland, for example, which has 15 per cent. of our population and thirty-two people to the square mile, as against 374 people to the square mile in the United Kingdom, uses between seven and eight times as much electric power as we do, and so effectively that it is almost impossible to go into the smallest village in the republic without finding that electricity is doing a large part of the rough, hard work.

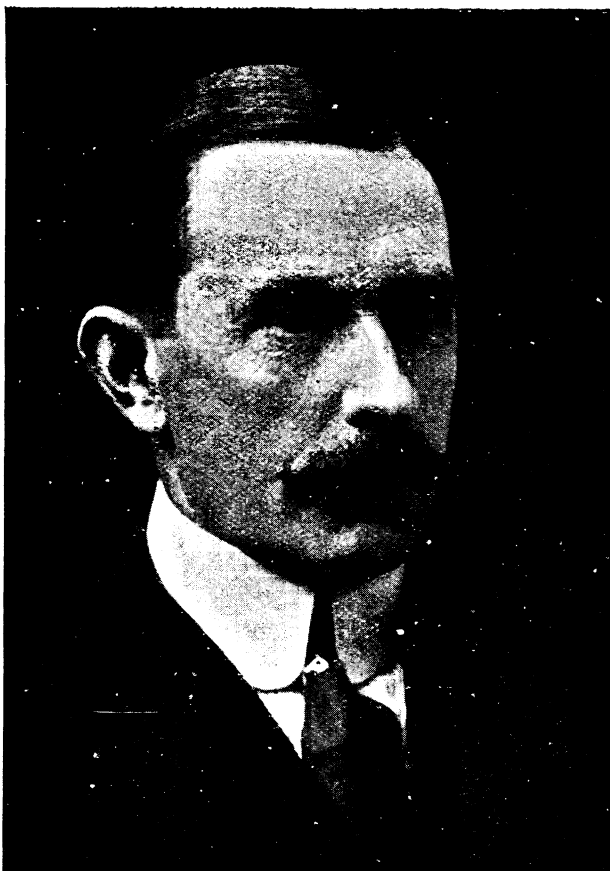


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[Russell.

COLONEL WILFRID ASHLEY, M.P.,

Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Transport.

Those who have been studying the question of electrical development at home and abroad for many years know perfectly well that if we do not use electricity to the fullest extent throughout industry, we cannot hope to meet world competition, we cannot secure the share of the world's trade which is our sole maintenance. Millions of tons of coal are burned every week in Great Britain to little purpose; most of the heat goes up the chimney, accompanied by the smoke that makes our towns dingy and robs the people of their health. Within the house, much of the labour carried on to-day would be avoided if there were sufficient electric power available, and it has been the policy of the Electricity Commissioners, under the direction and with the approval of the Ministry of Transport, to develop great power centres throughout the country and gradually to supersede the smaller undertakings which cannot be carried on economi-

cally or to the public benefit. When we have these stations in full working order—and several are to-day in being—it will be possible to revolutionise industry, to convey power to the factory, to reduce coal consumption, to do away with much hard labour that is manual to-day, and, generally speaking, to effect a transformation of the utmost importance. At this point the Electricity Commissioners and the railway interest come into close contact, for it is hoped in the course of time, not only to electrify our railways, but to tap the current that will run by the side of the rails and carry it in sufficient quantity to the farms and the villages on either side, to render power available there.

The economic advantage of applying electricity to railways is enormous, the saving of labour immense. At present every steam generating railway engine is a separate entity. Its fires must be lighted, and they take time to burn up; its fires must be drawn, and the labour is long and tedious. During the time it is waiting, while it is preparing to work, and when it is preparing to rest, the engine is consuming coal and oil, and creating loss. The electric engine needs neither loading nor drawing; it receives power only when it is required to move, and the moment work is over ceases to be an expense.

This is, of course, a very brief statement that people with technical knowledge could amplify. It is interesting to note that electrification of railways has only been controlled just in time. There is every suggestion that if a measure of supervision had been delayed, we should have had different systems of electrification at work throughout the country, with the result that standardisation would have been out of the question. As things are, one railway company has been compelled to claim special treatment, because it has instituted electrification on a system that cannot be followed by other companies.

It is, of course, impossible, within the limits of length that a magazine article imposes, to deal in any detail with the ramifications of any great State Department, and certainly transport would demand a book, and not a short one, to cover the whole field of its activities. The powers given to the Ministry on its creation in 1919 are both great and small; a few examples are worth quoting:—

This Department can order gates at the level crossings of public carriage roads to

be kept closed across the railway instead of across the road. It has power to exempt a railway company from providing smoking compartments. It can cause stranded or sunken vessels in the River Mersey to be destroyed or to be raised and sold. It can give directions as to the lights that must be exhibited at night at the entrance to the Manchester Ship Canal. It can declare that a main road in any county has ceased to be a main road, and has become an ordinary road.

It can regulate the construction of the driving-wheels of locomotives used on the highway. It can appoint engineers or surveyors to determine differences between Poplar Borough Council and the Port Authority as to the maintenance of the swing-bridge over Millwall Dock entrance, and it can appoint a harbour-master to the Royal Harbour at Kingstown.

Turn from this side of the work to the larger functions, and we find that the Ministry was given power to sanction the amount of outstanding advances obtained by the Port of London Authority exceeding £1,000,000, and not exceeding £2,000,000. It can receive application for a Provisional Order to authorise construction of pier and harbour works up to an expenditure of £100,000. It can, with the approval of the Treasury, make advances to any highway authority in respect of the construction of new roads. It can certify the Treasury that the making of a light railway is necessary, and that the railway cannot be constructed without special assistance from the State. It may determine that it is desirable for a light railway to be constructed for the development of fisheries or other industries, and certify that special assistance from the State is required. The list of powers and responsibilities, large and small, might be continued indefinitely, but enough has been said to show how varied and intricate are the questions that the Ministry has had to face and determine since it came into being in August 1919.

The important part which has been and is being played by the Ministry of Transport has been outlined. The work of this Ministry, under whatever name it may be carried on, is a necessity which has to be admitted even by those who have most energetically decried it. In some respects it has now fulfilled its purpose, but its standard and paramount responsibilities continue, and therefore the most active part of its organisation remains at work. Indeed, though nominally some of its

functions "return whence they came," they do so in a much more drastic form than in pre-War days. For instance, the grouping of the railways of Great Britain is now a *fait accompli*, except for relatively formal concluding procedure; but the Rates Tribunal is in active session, and other sections of the Railways Act require the continued existence of powers delegated to the Ministry of Transport. The Roads section and the Electricity Commission are "live" sections whose activities will necessarily be preserved.

The fact is that where railways are concerned, the return of the companies to private enterprise—the necessary course as soon as Government control under guarantee conditions came to an end—reduced the functions of the Ministry in regard to railways very materially, so that in that connection it has latterly had few powers beyond those prescribed by the Railways Act of 1921, and others of older date taken over from the Board of Trade and other State Departments. But the roads and, in fact,

all non-railway sections retain active interests and responsibilities, some at least of which will tend rather to increase than to diminish.

The Ministry has been generally responsible for the construction and improvement of public roads, but because these are public, and have no relation to the traffic passing over them, it has not had control over the traffic to a degree at all equivalent to the control exercised over other public service transport, and it must raise revenue through national instead of individual taxation. There is therefore abundant scope for some such central authority to exercise a correlating and co-ordinating influence between all forms of public service transport.

The Ministry retains control in regard to the bases of charges, if not the actual charges, the conditions of operation, etc., wherever transport is conducted on routes or land obtained through Parliamentary action. This covers tramways, canals, docks and harbours, etc., as well as railways.

III.

TRANSPORT AS IT WILL BE.

Dating from January 1, 1923, onwards, nearly all the main line railways of Great Britain were amalgamated into four great systems, known, respectively, as the Southern, Great Western, London Midland and Scottish, and London and North Eastern. Including lines leased and worked, or owned, leased or worked jointly, by the companies now comprised in each group, the respective route mileages are 2,200, 3,800, 7,790, and 6,590. The "constituent" companies which principally form the new concerns were as follows:

Southern: London and South Western, 1,020½ miles; London Brighton and South Coast, 457¼ miles; London Chatham and Dover, South Eastern and South Eastern and Chatham Railways Managing Committee, 637¾ miles.

Great Western: Great Western, 3,005 miles; Barry, 68 miles; Cambrian, 295¼ miles; Cardiff, 11¾ miles; Rhymney, 51 miles; Taff Vale, 124½ miles; Alexandra (Newport and South Wales) Docks and Railway, 10¼ miles.

London Midland and Scottish: London

and North Western (including Lancashire and Yorkshire, amalgamated from January 1, 1922), 2,667½ miles; Midland, 2,107¾ miles; North Staffordshire, 220¾ miles; Furness, 158 miles; Caledonian, 1,114½ miles; Glasgow and South Western, 493½ miles; Highland, 506 miles.

London and North Eastern: North Eastern, 1,757¾ miles; Great Central, 852½ miles; Great Eastern, 1,191¼ miles; Great Northern, 1,051¼ miles; Hull and Barnsley, 106½ miles; North British, 1,378 miles; Great North of Scotland, 334½ miles.

To some extent, procedure is yet incomplete, and when all the detail amalgamations have been settled, it will be necessary for the Ministry of Transport to give its final approval. But as the preliminary amalgamations have been approved, and there are but few outstanding matters to be settled, this is largely a matter of form, the Railways Act of 1921 giving, in fact, little scope for argument at this stage. As the financial terms associated with the various amalgamations are considered to be reasonably satisfactory on the whole, and most

of the points of controversy have already been worked out, while the shareholders have, in most cases, approved of the terms arranged, the four railways have, in fact, already commenced to function in place of the individual companies. The setting up of the new organisations is also in progress, and although they are more or less of an interim character, and are so described in some instances, it is noteworthy that they include the lines and officers of one or two companies in regard to which amalgamation arrangements were at the time incomplete. It is, therefore, substantially correct to say that the requirements of the Railways Act of 1921 in this respect are now fulfilled. There are, however, certain matters outstanding from the developments of the War and post-War periods to which, as already pointed out, certain functions of the Ministry of Transport still apply.

As a result of the grouping of railways the reduction of directorates and chief and district or divisional managements must result in considerable economies, not altogether because there was undue waste under separate ownership and operation, but because so much work will be brought under one control and direction that many of the factors which added so largely to costs will automatically disappear. In this connection bookkeeping and staff matters figure prominently, but similar benefits will accrue from the standardisation of design and practice in regard to the construction, repair, maintenance, and oversight of locomotives, rolling stock, permanent way and engineering material, and plant and stores generally. For example, we have at present considerable numbers of different types of locomotive. Some of these types are split up into classes; they may vary but slightly, yet spare parts must be provided for each individual class. This involves considerable expenditure, not only in manufacture, but in storage and superintendence. Experts believe that it should be possible to reduce engine types to about a dozen, some of which would have the same wheel arrangement. Then we have the question of load gauge, and what is required is a standard load gauge instead of the 66 load gauges that are in use at the present time. Then such things as valves, valve gears, injectors, lubricators, and other fittings could be standardised, and standard boilers might be used on all types of engines. It is believed that half a dozen standard types would meet every requirement of our

railways. Axle-boxes are another important part of which we have all too many kinds, and when we come to goods wagons, the present condition of things is seen to be very unsatisfactory. We have wagons that will carry 8 tons, 10, and 12 tons. The wagon that is really required is the 20-ton wagon, weighing little more than half as much again as the 10-ton, though the cost of using it is practically the same. It has been estimated that if we could run our trains to carry an average weight increased from the present 134 tons to 200 tons, the annual saving would be nearly £10,000,000.

If the average speed of freight and passenger trains could be increased, the work could be done in less time and at less cost. To bring up the speed of the freight train from its present average of $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour to 10 miles an hour would result in an annual saving of nearly £5,000,000. Our average wagon load to-day is about $5\frac{1}{2}$ tons; to increase it by only half a ton would save £2,000,000 per annum, and the use of 116,000 wagons. We have only to think of such things as shunting and congestion and the space demanded to handle a number of small wagons to see what else would be added to the advantages. Now that the chief railways are grouped, it will be possible to make more effective use of locomotives, by increasing the daily mileage during each turn of duty, and so reducing unproductive time. At present each railway company has to keep a certain number of engines "standing by," but as the grouping becomes effective, this number will be automatically reduced. At present we have too many locomotives, running-sheds, and terminals under separate organisations with separate staffs, and with a large part of these, too, it will be possible, in due course, to dispense.

An important feature of the grouped railways of the new era is the breaking down of so many "frontiers" where traffic was interchanged. These in many cases constituted the compulsory limits of working of engines and passenger carriages, beyond which goods wagons became the subject of charge by the railway on to which they passed. Many of these places cease to be "frontiers" at all; record-keeping of wagons and papers in regard to their contents are no longer required, and there is no need for the Railway Clearing House to apportion charges and receipts between the various interests concerned; engines and trains are available for use on

both sides of the "frontier" point and for working through, without reference to individual ownership, with the result that duties can be combined to give greater mileage and more profitable use, and to reduce the numbers of engines, vehicles, and staff in service; staff questions, supervision, and other matters are vastly simplified, and a great deal of form-filling, record-keeping, and exchanges of advices is eliminated altogether.

Take, for example, a great traffic centre such as York. The station was the property of the North Eastern Railway, and lines in all directions belonged to that company for at least a dozen miles or so. Trains of five other companies also used the station (six before the Lancashire and Yorkshire was amalgamated with the London and North Western). But none of these had any right to go north of York—though this was occasionally done as a matter of arrangement—and each service, and the engines and rolling-stock therefor, had to be kept to itself, whether the engines and staff came from places only thirty or forty miles or a hundred miles away. Now, however, it is an easy matter to extend, say, a late Great Central train from Sheffield through to Scarborough, a Great Eastern engine which came on at Lincoln to Harrogate, or a Great Northern engine and train to some other route north of York. It will, indeed, be possible to combine journeys of engines and trains over two or more of the recently separate railways, thus saving much valuable time lost merely because no return or continuation trip is available for an hour or so, and getting better mileage and increased duty out of engines, vehicles, and staff. At York this applies only as between the railways named, as the Midland and London and North Western belong to another group. These two companies are, however, in the same group, so that they can combine their services in the same way.

Another point is that many joint lines disappear, the owners coming into one group. This avoids the need for special book-keeping and staff to deal with the interests of each party, and apportionment of receipts is no longer required. The Portpatrick and Wigtownshire Joint Railway in Scotland is a case in point. This was owned by the London and North Western, Midland, Caledonian, and Glasgow and South Western Railways, all now the London Midland and Scottish Railway.

All the joint lines and all the great frontier points are not simplified in this way, but even where two or more groups are concerned there is a reduction in the number of parties whose interests have to be co-ordinated. There will also be advantage in that there are fewer negotiating parties to deal with special through carriage facilities. Thus the East and West Coast Anglo-Scottish routes each come under one ownership all the way from London to Inverness or Aberdeen and beyond; the Aberdeen-Penzance and Newcastle-Swansea through services now concern only the Eastern and the Western groups instead of four railways; and many long composite journeys affect only one or at most two groups, instead of three or four or more separate railways.

It is also possible for a single engine shed at a busy centre to supply locomotives for routes which were worked by two or more railways whose engines had to be kept to their own trains. In many instances, too, a single set of divisional officers and staff is able to control all the traffic of a given area. Thus in South Wales all the lines and traffic of the Taff Vale, Rhymney, Barry, and other small lines has already been placed under the oversight of the Great Western district officers. This does not mean that the *employés* of these lines have been superseded by Great Western men. Many of the new officers are from the railways taken over; but separate offices and staffs for the traffic of the same district are thus avoided, and this opens the way for considerable operating economies.

These and many other aspects might be considered in further detail, but what has been said will indicate some of the directions in which the grouping of the railways is expected to realise important economies and thus open the way for general improvement and, in due course, for the cheapening of rail transport charges.

Some fear has been expressed that the changes outlined are going to lead to a large measure of unemployment, but this theory would appear to be ill-founded. Our railway system employs hundreds of thousands of workers, and year by year some die, some retire, some are superannuated. The normal wastage is considerable, and what is likely to happen is that the number of new people taken into the railway service will be reduced for a few years, after which matters will settle down to a "new normal."

It is necessary also to consider certain aspects of the Road *v.* Rail problem, which is, in many respects, acute. It is now quite clear that under many circumstances it is cheaper and more convenient to convey goods from door to door by road, and even if the railway companies were permitted to carry goods entirely by road, without going on rail at all, when that might be the most satisfactory course, it would still leave the position very much where it is.

The great difficulty is that roads cost money to construct and maintain, but they are free to all, which is not the case with railway permanent way and premises. If road transport firms are to be freed from paying their full share, the alternative is State or general public assistance, and that should carry with it State control of the bases of charges and the conditions of transport. The charges on railways are controlled, not because they are public service transport agencies, but because the companies received Parliamentary powers for the construction of their lines. If roads are to be provided specially for commercial road transport, they also must carry obligations, either by special charges to cover the tremendous costs of construction or reconstruction, or by control of charges, etc., so as to equalise the burden on those to whom it applies and to prevent unfair competition, rate-cutting, and other selfish and oftentimes suicidal methods such as those which characterised early railway days before legislation became operative. It may not be possible to control privately-owned vehicles, but it is becoming increasingly apparent that eventually there will have to be a degree of control of public service road vehicles in regard to charges and conditions of transport as well as in respect of quality of equipment and machinery and competence of staff.

Tramways, canals, docks and harbours are already largely controlled in the matter of charges, equipment, staff, etc., but there is great scope for improving and developing them from the transport point of view. The

great difficulty with these is, and always will be, the provision of funds for improvement and extension. Even if these are State-provided, the responsibility for "paying their way" remains, and the position is not greatly different from that of concerns based upon capital provided by private enterprise, though this aspect is usually overlooked almost entirely when this or that is advocated in irresponsible circles. The road transport problem differs in that it is made up of a large number of more or less independent problems, whose relative smallness prevents the main problem being viewed in correct perspective. So long as the small scale is retained, this is not a matter of great importance. But it is growing; large combines are in prospect, the need for new and strengthened roads is urgent, though the means of raising revenue therefor is not so apparent, except that of digging further into the coffers of the State. Yet while the Ministry of Transport has had control of the charging of all other transport agencies, it has only been able to reach the road user through national taxation, though the Ministry has been expected to provide funds for the benefit of trade transport as well as for that of the private rider or driver.

It will thus be seen that the railway problem is in process of effective solution, and the way is now clear for the "new railway era," wherein our railways shall be economically and operatively sound transport agencies rendering good service to trade and manufacture, and assisting the progress of industry generally. The situation is much less sound where road transport is concerned, and it must, to a great extent, "work out its own salvation." There are, however, good auguries for the future of public service transport in all forms, despite many uncertainties, but it is essential to our national progress and prosperity, industrial and commercial, that its various applications shall be co-ordinated and brought into correct relation, one to another.



VALERIE FRENCH

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "*Anthony Lyveden*," "*Berry and Co.*," "*Jonah and Co.*,"
"*The Brother of Daphne*," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS.—The great woodland estate of Gramarye, in the Cotswolds, was on fire, but when the news spread nobody cared, for the house was tumbling down, the park was deserted, and their owner, Colonel Winchester, was in a madhouse, to which local opinion held that he had been driven by some malign influence in this wilderness of a property. The mental breakdown of Anthony Lyveden while working for him was ascribed to the same cause. From a spur of the Cotswolds a man looked down upon the holocaust, but cared no more than anyone else, for he had lost his memory. Sitting at his feet was a small rough-haired dog for whose presence he could not account, and both were in the last stage of exhaustion when found, struggling on their way in search of food, by two privates of the R.A.S.C., in charge of a motor lorry, who sheltered and befriended them and gave them a lift to the next village. There the kindly landlord of an inn gave them hospitality, assuring Anthony Lyveden that he need not pay anything until able to do so. After bestowing upon himself and the Sealyham the names of "Jonathan" and "Hamlet," in his inability to remember even his own name, Anthony Lyveden and the dog, refreshed and grateful, set forth to seek their fortune. About this time Lady Touchstone wrote to her kinsman, Cardinal Forest, "Poor Anthony Lyveden's body was found a fortnight ago. We had him buried at Girdle," but, being on the Continent, she had not yet heard of the burning of Gramarye, and was referring to the search for Anthony, who had disappeared, and to the discovery of a dead body assumed to be his. She had gone abroad with her grief-stricken niece, Valerie French, who had been engaged to be married to Anthony, and at Dinard they made the acquaintance of an English girl, André Strongith'arm—the *fiancée* of Colonel Winchester—who gave Valerie a profoundly moving account of Anthony's life and work at Gramarye, and of the baleful influence of the place upon his brain. A day later André was recalled to England by the news of Colonel Winchester's sudden recovery. Meantime Anthony Lyveden and his dog fell in with Sir Andrew Plazue, K.C., upon the Oxford Road, and by this chance encounter Anthony made for himself a friend indeed. Rough and hot-tempered, but kindly, the famous lawyer took a liking to "Jonathan Wood," and, when he learned that, having lost all memory of his own identity, he was beginning life again, engaged him as his secretary. André had been deeply in love with Anthony, but without awakening any response from him; now, however, that he was apparently dead, she determined to try to forget the matter and devote herself to her *fiancé*, Richard Winchester. At the latter's first meeting with her new friend, Valerie, he astounded the two girls by casually remarking that from a cab in Fleet Street he had just seen Anthony Lyveden, only to lose him again among the byways of the Temple. To the answer, "But he's dead! He's buried at Girdle," Winchester replied, "Nonsense! I'd know him anywhere. Besides, he had his dog with him—a Sealyham, with a big, black patch on his back."

IV. BLIND ALLEY.

A GIRL with auburn hair stared out of a window.

It was a blazing afternoon.

Immediately below her the traffic of Piccadilly advanced in an everlasting series of short rushes, like infantry going into action. The laboured breathing of the buses in the intervals between their spurts at once lent colour to the illusion and made up a stertorous foundation of uproar, above which little but coughs and hoots of warning, the sudden storm of an engine or the crash of a taxi's gears managed to rise. Beyond, raked by the afternoon sun, a somewhat stale Green Park belied its name. The pitiless drought waxing, London's precious fields had come to look second-hand.

But the girl with auburn hair was spared tumult and shabbiness alike. She neither heard the one nor perceived the other. In

a word, André Strongith'arm was preoccupied.

Hers was not the case of the widow who, after she has re-married, encounters her first husband, but it was pretty closely allied to that most awkward condition. Her plight was that of the dog—unaccountably omitted by Æsop—who, after considerable hesitation, has preferred substance to shadow, only to find that the shadow was, after all, no shadow, but stuff just as good as it looked.

She had officially renounced the late Anthony Lyveden. She had resigned all claim to the deceased in favour of Valerie French. Also she had resumed her engagement with Richard Winchester. Renunciation, resignation, and resumption had all worked together very well. They were, of course, jointly and severally founded upon Anthony Lyveden's death. And now, without any warning, the rock

had crumbled away. Anthony Lyveden was alive and in London. He had been seen that morning.

These were the hard facts. Now for the little ironies.

It was Richard Winchester who had seen Lyveden : it was she who had arranged for Richard and Valerie to meet : it was at this meeting that Richard, in all ignorance, had announced his amazing news. More. What I am sure would have pleased Sophocles was that Richard was at this moment most capably assisting Valerie to find his rival. . . .

Pell-mell the three had repaired to the Temple, where Anthony had been seen. There Richard had posted each of the girls at a point commanding two exits. Himself he had sworn delightedly to answer for the rest, while a transfigured Valerie had thanked him with a smile out of heaven itself. . . . So soon as he was out of sight, André had made her escape and had returned to her hotel. The limit had been reached—passed. Labouring under a delusion, she had conveyed her freehold : she could not bring herself to subscribe to the livery of seisin. To be pressed enthusiastically into such monstrous service was more than André's flesh and blood could endure. . . . She could not know that two minutes after she had deserted her post Anthony Lyveden had followed her out of the Temple.

André stared at the sunshine decking the havoc it had wrought.

What should she do ? Was she to lie in the bed which she had made ? Or should she declare her position, demolish her existing couch, and set herself forthwith to make another ? The idea of setting to work without telling Richard and Valerie never occurred to her. André was honest to a fault. She would not have deceived a dog. She could strike, and that without pity, but she could never feint. Craft of any sort she abhorred utterly. It was as much this very abhorrence as anything else which, though she did not know it, had compelled her to leave the Temple two hours before. . . .

Supposing she made a new bed, what would it be like ?

First, Richard must be sent packing. The stage had to be cleared. Then Valerie must be told that she—André—was out for Anthony Lyveden. Finally, for the bed to be anything other than the planks of misery, Lyveden, when found, had to be made to love her.

There is nothing like looking the future

full in the face . . . André observed that, viewed from this standpoint, its features left much to be desired.

For one thing, if Richard were dismissed, he would never re-enter her service. That was as clear as daylight. It was hardly likely that the clock would be put back a second time. André disliked the proverb which sets the poulterer's shelf above the butts. She found it unsporting. All the same, the saw edged its way into her mind and sat there, looking very wise and unpleasantly worthy.

What was less certain, but very possible, was that Anthony Lyveden would not come up to the scratch. Once before he had failed signally. Besides, he was Valerie French's affianced husband. . . . Thackeray's tremendous dictum bundled into her mind. 'A woman with fair opportunities, and without an absolute hump, may marry WHOM SHE LIKES.' Yes, but Thackeray left himself a tremendous loophole. 'Fair opportunities.' Noun and adjective alike were extremely flexible. And her opportunities were not fair. In fact, she had none. Like the prospective bed, they had to be made.

Indeed, the one and only thing to be said for such an attempt was that the bed, successfully contrived, would knock her existing couch into a cocked hat. The deal, if compassed, would make the audacious speculator unearthly rich . . . if compassed. . . .

Always the flame of speculation was flickering in André's heart. She was so built. Her daring in the hunting-field was a byword. Only her love of horses restrained her at all. But for that, she would have been killed years ago.

And so, madness as it may seem, before the radiance of the prize André almost went down. Inspired by some false god, almost she determined 'to put it to the touch to gain or lose it all.' Blinded by the glory of a phantom success, she could not see failure. So it was not the certainty of failure which stopped her dead. Neither—to her discredit—was it the thought of Richard, that splendid, honourable giant, which brought her up all standing. It was a pair of violet eyes, very beautiful and very, very tired, but smiling gently and easily for all their weariness. . . .

Success meant that Valerie French, her rival, would be broken, body and soul, upon the wheel.

As I have hinted, André was not of the

kind that waste their pity. If others went to the wall on her account, that was their own look-out. They should have shoved harder. But here was a difference. Twice she had done Valerie most grievous wrong. She knew it. The fact could not be blinked. That the injuries were now repaired was beside the point. She had not repaired them. She owed the girl something. She had kicked her when she was down. Now she was on her feet, it was out of the question that she should administer the *coup de grâce*. Anthony or no, it could not possibly be done. . . .

Of course, if Anthony saw her—preferred her to Valerie—made the running himself, that would be different. As it was, she could not move in the matter . . . could not, possibly. . . .

Noblesse oblige.

Where reason, decency, common sense—even the instinct of self-preservation had gone for nothing, magnanimity of all emotions had done the trick. And this was no daw in peacock's feathers, but the real thing. André honestly considered that she was standing aside, letting Valerie French go in and win.

That same evening André visited Valerie and told her in very plain terms why she had deserted her post. She added that, if Valerie would allow it, she would henceforth do her utmost to help her find Anthony Lyveden.

Valerie laughed gaily.

"I should think you ride pretty straight," she said simply. "And now it's my turn. I very nearly kissed your Richard this afternoon. I had to drag him away, or he 'ld 've been there still. Not that I wanted to go, but Rome wasn't built in an eight-hour day. I know that Anthony's alive and here—in London. The rest will follow. I'm sure of it. Colonel Winchester was kindness itself—and efficiency. He went home swearing that Anthony should be found and that he 'ld find him. I asked him why he was so good. He simply stared. 'But you're a friend of André's,' he said. 'Aren't you?'"

"I hope you said 'Yes,'" said André Strongith'arm.

Valerie nodded.

* * * * *

When Colonel Richard Winchester affirmed that he had seen Anthony Lyveden alive and walking, exactly twenty-eight days after the remains of Anthony Lyveden had been reverently interred at Girdle, it will be seen that he was making a statement

which might easily have been questioned. That it was accepted wholly by his hearers was due in some measure to the fact that, while both of them had seen the grave, neither of them had seen its contents, but, mainly, to Winchester himself. The man's personality simply compelled belief. . . .

And so, though the days went by, and Lyveden was neither seen again nor heard of, Valerie found no fault in her portion. Indeed, she held herself blessed. True, she was not yet in Paradise, but she had escaped out of that Pit which hath no exit. Her dead had been raised. The 'great gulf fixed' no longer mattered: Anthony and she were both upon the same side. Paradise could wait. . . .

Not that she and her councillors wasted their time. The most exhaustive inquiries were set on foot: advertisements appeared: Winchester himself conducted a house-to-house investigation of the Temple. Indeed, short of setting a price upon Anthony Lyveden's head, everything possible was done to locate the gentleman. With it all, the latter obstinately defied detection.

And there, of course, was the rub—the riddle which no one could read.

If Lyveden was alive and up and doing, why did he make himself scarce?

I have not discussed it because it was not discussed: Valerie never referred to it, nor did the others: it did not depress her, because an eccentric lion is so much better than a dead one. But . . .

Speculation, wrote Lady Touchstone, is idle—nothing worth. Anthony holds the answer in his fine, grey eyes. When we find him we shall know—instantly. Personally, I am convinced that there is nothing seriously amiss. He is not mad. That ghost was laid when Gramarye was burned. Probably he thinks he is not wanted. Once before he thought so, and with good reason. And now his mind has thrown back. . . . Meanwhile we wait—triumphantly. We know that it is only a matter of time. Such confidence would be ridiculous if it were not sublime. (I am trying to write coherently, but there is a distracting buzzing noise which I cannot locate.) Talking of eyes, if ever veiled pity looked out of anyone's orbs, it looks out of the lawyers'. Need I say that they are wholly sceptical of our discovery? They do not believe a word of it. Not that they say so. Oh, no. They listen attentively to what we say, fall in with our plans, respectfully indorse our enthusiasm. They 'hope very much that we shall find Major Lyveden very soon.' But they know that we shan't. They

simply cannot get over the death certificate. That Somerset House should be harbouring an impostor is to them incomprehensible—a heathenish suggestion. Anthony is legally dead. I had it out with Forsyth the other day. "Why," I said, "are you so hide-bound?" "Ma'am," says he, "there is a faith which can remove mountains. I have always coveted it." "So have I," said I. "But I don't covet common sense, because I've got some." Forsyth spread out his hands. "Pity the weaker vessel," he said. "Pity the legal mind," said I, "that places black and white before flesh and blood. I'll dance at their wedding yet—but not with a lawyer." "No, don't," says he. "They'll trip you up every time." I could afford to laugh. (I wish this mysterious noise would stop. I cannot think what it is. It sounds so indignant.) If you could see Valerie, John, your heart would leap. Her radiance, her eagerness, her joie de vivre make me feel that I must paw the ground. I actually do so sometimes, under the table. Her beauty takes away my breath. Her eyes alone. . . . I tell you, people stop still in the street and stare after her. And I see them and try not to burst into tears. The very gods must be amazed at the effects of their gift. Her confidence would frighten me to death, if I did not share it. But, as I have said, it is sublime, not of this world. We have no doubt—this time. Anthony will be found, if not to-day, to-morrow. It is inevitable. We are a singular quartette—Valerie, André Strongi'th arm, Colonel Winchester and I, and should, I think, go very well in a revue. Valerie contributes the life, Winchester the drive, André the dash, and I the low comedy, as a sort of confidential groom-of-the-chambers, fat, forgetful, superfluous and spending half my life asking people to 'spell it' over the telephone. Which reminds me, I've left the receiver off. . . .

* * * * *

Sir Andrew Plague was in Chambers.

That the Temple was empty and the Law Courts closed did not matter to him. The man was above custom. He went as he pleased.

A desultory fire of snorts and grunts of indignation, audible in the clerks' room and greatly relished by the two 'juniors,' suggested that their master was perusing Case Law, while the occasional crash of a volume declared the K.C.'s contempt for a dictum which should not have been printed and might have been left unsaid.

After a while the objections suddenly ceased, and from the succeeding silence a listener might have assumed that Sir Andrew was asleep. The clerks knew better, and

fell to whispering or, if they had occasion to move, did so a-tiptoe. Sir Andrew was not asleep: he was using his brain.

By dint of supreme concentration he was at once shaping, ordering, compressing and expressing his conclusions regarding a question of law, and doing it about thirty times as swiftly and twice as skilfully as could anyone else alive.

There was nothing traditional about his pose. His huge arms folded upon the table, his massive head bowed, his great red face buried in his sleeve, the man might have been dead. From a tray by his side a cigar sent up a slender, swaying column of smoke. Before him an old chronometer measured the moments with the deliberate dignity of a forgotten age. . . .

Presently the thinker lifted up his head. For a moment he stared at the chronometer. Then he sat back in his chair and blew through his nose. His work was done.

Sir Andrew stretched out his hand and smote with great violence the hand-bell upon his table. The instrument, which had survived outrageous treatment for nearly two months, followed the example of its predecessors and broke. With an oath, Sir Andrew flung it into a corner.

"Streuf," said one of the 'juniors' in the adjoining room. "If 'e ain't done in that bell. An' the place where I got it, they said I could stan' on it."

"Yes, but they didn't say 'e could," snapped his superior, hurrying out of the office.

A moment later he stood before his master. "Destroy that bell," said Sir Andrew, jerking his head at the corner. "And sack the fool who bought it. Oh, and return that brief, and tell 'em that Lincoln's Inn's the other side of the street."

Mr. Junket swallowed.

"I did remark, sir," he said, "that it was a point of Chancery law, but they said they knew that, and they'd rather 'ave your opinion than any in Lincoln's Inn."

"Lying hounds," replied Sir Andrew. "What they mean is, everyone else is away."

"I don't think it's that, sir," cautiously ventured the clerk. "There's plenty the other side would give an opinion. But Mr. Firmer's attendin' to this 'imself, an' you know what 'e thinks of you, sir," he added proudly.

"I don't!" shouted Sir Andrew. "I haven't the faintest idea. Send me the shorthand clerk. If they like to waste their money, that's their look-out."

"Very good, sir."

Mr. Junket retired precipitately, and a moment later the shorthand writer appeared. As he closed the door, Sir Andrew began to dictate. . . .

"My opinion is valueless. I know little of

that the Court before which the case would ordinarily come has discretion sufficient to enable it to distinguish right from wrong, your client will not be permitted to proceed with the development of his property, so long as the lord of the manor, however base his motive, requests that such permission may be denied. That's all. Send Junket."

The senior clerk reappeared.

"I told you to destroy that bell," said Sir Andrew. "Why the devil don't you do it?" Junket made a rush for the corner. "I'm leaving in five minutes. Produce it to me destroyed before I go."

"Very good, sir." Arrived at the door, the clerk hesitated. "There's—there's rather an urgent case, sir," he said uneasily, peering at a pile of papers upon his master's table. "A case to advise—from Mincing's. They've been pressing me now, sir, for over a week. An' another from——"

"D'you want to kill me?" demanded Sir Andrew. "This is the Long Vacation. If they don't want to wait, they can take their matters elsewhere. I won't do another stroke until to-morrow. Destroy that bell."

"Very good, sir."

The next moment Junket was in the clerks' room.

"'Ere, George," he said, handing the bell to his subordinate. "Take that out an' break it. Look sharp."



"'You brute,' said Lady Touchstone deliberately."

Chancery doctrines, and, happily, nothing of those appointed to administer them. It is a principle of law that . . . (here followed a masterly 'opinion,' dealing root and branch with the matter and setting intricacy by the ears) . . . In these circumstances, provided

"'Break it'?" said George, staring at the battered instrument. "But it's broke already."

"Never mind about that," cried Junket, thrusting the bell into his hand. "'E wants it 'destroyed.' 'E's got to see it

'destroyed' before 'e goes. An' 'e's goin' in four minutes. For gauze sake, be quick. You know what 'e is." He turned to the shorthand writer, who was transcribing the 'opinion.' "Do the las' paragraph, Jim, 's quick as you can. So 's I can get 'im to sign it before 'e goes."

"But look 'ere," protested George, "I ain't a blacksmith. 'Ow can I——"

"Look 'ere," rejoined his senior, taking out his watch. "D'you want the bird? 'Cause, if 'e asks for that bell before it's ruined, you can 'ave it in one. Take the blighter out," he added fiercely, "an' keep on chuckin' it down on the flegstones till——"

A sudden bellow from Sir Andrew's room threw the three clerks into a panic.

George rushed out of the Chambers: Jim drove his pen like a madman; while the unfortunate Junket wiped his brow and, nervously adjusting his collar, prepared to answer the summons.

Beyond, however, that Sir Andrew observed darkly that the bell was due to be demolished in three minutes' time, Mr. Junket was merely ordered to send four 'cases to advise' to his master's private house.

The clerk withdrew relievedly.

rather improved than anything else, and, what was worse, upon being tested, it rang smartly.

George broke into a sweat.

Indeed, but for the sight of a dray standing in Middle Temple Lane, he would, I think, have retired at once from the Temple and the unequal contest. . . .

Necessity knows no law.

A moment later the bell was in position beneath the off hind wheel, and George was backing the horses like an Artillery driver under fire. . . .

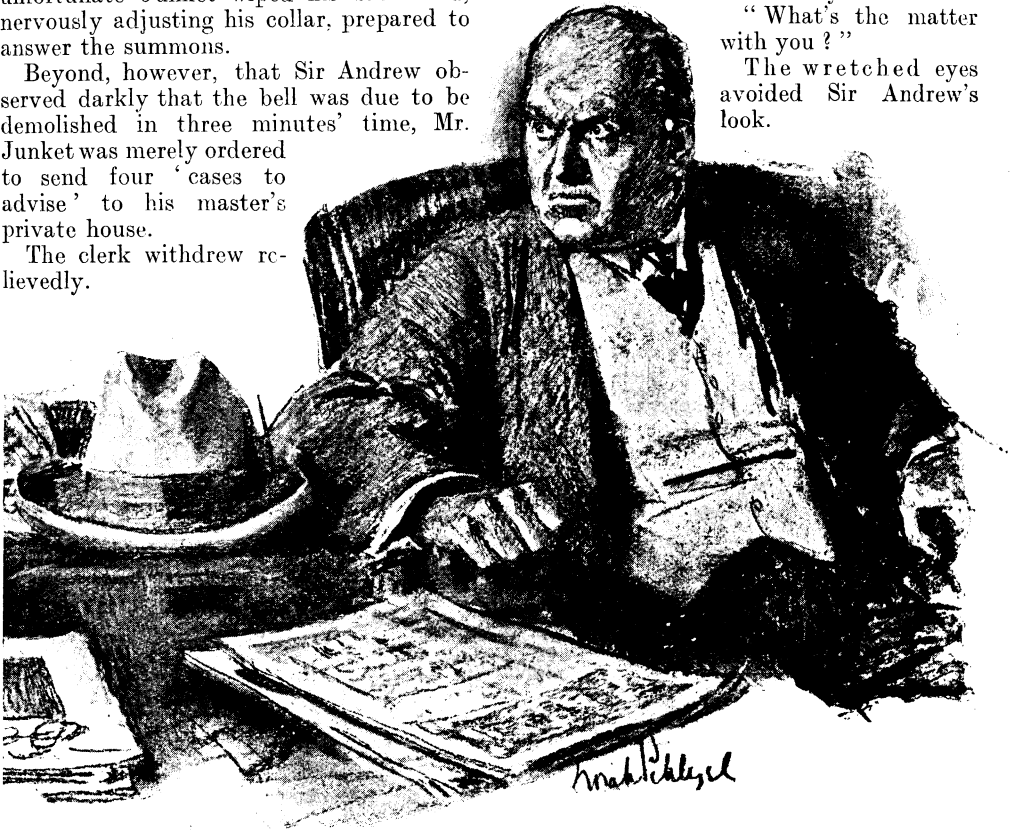
Sir Andrew surveyed the fragments with grim satisfaction. Then he signed his 'opinion' and called for his hat. . . .

As he stepped on to the Embankment, a ragged fellow passed him, with misery in his eyes.

The K.C. called him back. He came uncertainly.

"What's the matter with you?"

The wretched eyes avoided Sir Andrew's look.



"'Were you addressing me?' 'I was,' said Lady Touchstone."

George, meanwhile, was working feverishly.

After four violent collisions with the flags, the condition of the bell seemed

"I'm—I'm 'ungry," faltered their owner, and turned away.

Sir Andrew counted ten shillings and put them into his hand.

"That's for food," he said shortly. "Not drink."

He turned to wave his stick at a passing cab. . . .

A moment later he was being carried Westwards at an unlawful pace.

Here let me say that Lady Touchstone's courage was of a high order. Danger, for instance, merely sharpened her wits. I do not think that she knew any physical fear. Yet, as she frankly admitted, each visit she paid her dentist undoubtedly shortened her life. To point the paradox, her anticipation of the ordeal was always far worse than the encounter. Compared with that of the waiting-room, the atmosphere of the condemned hold seemed to her almost jovial. Indeed, she so much abhorred the former that she was always most careful to arrive late, with the result that her detention in the ante-chamber of horrors was seldom more than a matter of sixty seconds. How, in the teeth of such provision, upon this particular morning she came to make such a mistake is incomprehensible, but it is a hard fact that she alighted in Brook Street precisely at four minutes past eleven, in painless ignorance that her vivisection had been fixed for a quarter to twelve.

For a while she fully believed that she was being kept waiting, but when twenty minutes had passed and she was still unsummoned, she rang the bell and inquired if Mr. Sleeseman was aware of her presence. . . .

Upon learning the awful truth, the unfortunate lady's first impulse was to withdraw; but, realising that if in her present nervous condition she emerged into the smiling streets, she would never have the fortitude to re-enter the house that morning, she sank into a chair and began to pluck at the pages of a periodical upon which the blessed gift of immortality had been apparently conferred.

Ten frightful minutes had slunk by, and Lady Touchstone, who had the room to herself, was half-way to nervous prostration—starting at every footfall, finding cause for nameless suspicion in every unfamiliar sound—when a bell was pealed with great violence and a blow upon the front door shook the house to its foundations.

After one tremendous bound the poor lady's heart stood still. . . .

A moment later came a rush of steps, the front door was opened, and an uproar of furious quarrelling was launched into the hall.

"Summon me, then," roared Sir Andrew, "you slanderous thief! You know who I am. Go into Court and swear that I've broken your springs. A-a-ah, you black-mailing villain! . . ."

The door was slammed with the shock of an explosion, tremendous footsteps pounded along the passage, and an instant later Sir Andrew was ushered into the room.

More dead than alive, Lady Touchstone, who had risen to her feet and stumbled towards the window, regarded his entrance with a palpitating indignation which knew no law.

The giant flounced into a chair and closed his eyes. . . .

"You brute," said Lady Touchstone deliberately.

At the third attempt Sir Andrew recovered his voice.

"Were you addressing me?"

"I was," said Lady Touchstone.

Sir Andrew rose to his feet.

"Madam," he said, "how dare you?"

"If you don't like it," said Lady Touchstone, who was feeling much better, "you can leave the room. You're a brute."

"A brute?" said Sir Andrew, taking a step forward.

"A brute," said Lady Touchstone.

"And don't talk about 'daring' to me. You ought to be on your knees, suing for pardon. This isn't a bull-ring. It's—it's a confessional."

"It's a public——"

"No, it isn't," was the disconcerting reply. "I've no doubt you'd feel more at home if it were. It's a place of mental affliction for patients who have a sense of their duty towards their neighbours. I suppose you're here with the object of receiving attention: apparently the idea exhilarates you. That alone is indecent. But when you flaunt such monstrous emotion under the noses of more reasonably-minded beings, it's—it's worse than brawling."

Sir Andrew Plague gasped. His eyes began to protrude.

"Brawling?" he repeated, as though unable to believe his ears. "Brawling, madam? What do you mean—'brawling'?"

"Brawling," said Lady Touchstone, "is the offence of quarrelling in a noisy and indecent manner upon holy ground. They used to do it at that very high church near the Cromwell Road. I say advisedly that

your behaviour is still more abominable. At least, they had the excuse of religious fervour."

"Madam," said Sir Andrew, in a shaking voice, "you presume upon the privilege of your sex. I am not in the habit of having my conduct criticised, still less of hearing it condemned."

"The more's the pity," flashed Lady Touchstone, bristling. "If those unfortunate enough to be associated with you occasionally corrected your failings, you would be less of a menace to society."

"Goats and monkeys!" yelled Plague.

Lady Touchstone stifled a scream.

"How dare you shout at me?" she demanded. "How dare you?"

With a frightful effort the lawyer mastered his voice.

"Madam," he said thickly, "you have spoken of bull-rings and brawling. Twice you have used the word 'indecent' in a context and with a meaning which admitted no possibility of misconstruction. Finally you have thought proper to style me 'a menace to society.' Madam, this may not be slander, but it is vulgar abuse, and while the Law will take no——"

"You will please," said Lady Touchstone, "withdraw that expression. I believe it to be a purely legal term, but it offends me."

For a long minute the two eyed one another across the mahogany table.

Then—

"I beg your pardon," said Plague uncertainly.

Lady Touchstone inclined her head.

"I regret," she said, "that I cannot return the compliment. Your conduct has been outrageous. Regardless of the feelings of others who, cast in a less—er—vigorous mould than yourself, may be awaiting in agony the attention to which you apparently look forward——"

"I don't. I loathe it. And my conduct's not been outrageous. You've no right to——"

"I have every right. You might have shattered my nerves. Because you have been annoyed, why should I suffer? Why should you vent your vile wrath——"

"Madam," cried Plague, trembling, "you go too far. If you have been inconvenienced by overhearing such protest as I thought fit to lodge against a scandalous attempt at blackmail, that is regrettable. It confers upon you no authority to insult a complete stranger, whose rights to the quiet enjoy-

ment of this chamber are co-equal with yours, and——"

"When you speak" said Lady Touchstone, "of 'the quiet enjoyment of this chamber,' you make me feel faint. So please don't do it again. I say, you've behaved disgracefully. What did you knock for?"

Sir Andrew swallowed.

"To gain admittance," he said.

"Then why did you ring?"

"I refuse——"

"Why did you ring?"

"For the same purpose."

"Did you really think that your usage of the bell could be misconstrued?"

"I was particularly anxious," blurted Sir Andrew Plague, "not to be kept waiting."

"Rot," said Lady Touchstone. "You were particularly anxious to vent your wrath—vile wrath. Why did you shout at the potman?"

"It wasn't a potman. It was——"

"Cabdriver, then. Was he deaf?"

"He was da—extremely insolent."

"Was he deaf?"

"Not that I know of."

"Of course he wasn't," said Lady Touchstone. "Why did you slam the door?"

"Hang it, madam, I——"

"Don't swear at me. Why did you irrupt into this room?"

"I didn't," cried Plague, writhing.

"Don't be absurd," said his tormentor.

"Your entrance was barbarous. You knocked, you slammed the door, you raved at the potman and irrupted into this room—all by way of indulging your horrible wrath. It's as plain as a pikestaff."

"It isn't at all. And it wasn't a——"

"Don't contradict me," snapped Lady Touchstone, "because I won't have it." Sir Andrew choked. "Besides, you've been rude enough. You haven't a leg to stand on. And if I've done anything to show you the error of your ways, this encounter, however distasteful, will not have been endured in vain."

With that, she picked up a paper, shook it into position, and took her seat upon a settle as if it had been a throne.

"It wasn't a potman," said Sir Andrew doggedly. "It was a cabdriver."

My lady replied with a look of unutterable contempt. . . .

Then the door was opened and the servant appeared.

Head in air, Lady Touchstone swept from the room. . . .

For a minute the giant stood as she had

left him. Then he picked up his hat and stole out of the house.

* * * * *

That Sir Andrew Plague swore by his new secretary was common knowledge. A good many others, who had to do with the knight, also swore by his secretary—the tall, good-looking fellow with the fine grey eyes, who stood them in so good stead. Indeed, though it was not yet one month since Jonathan Wood, Gentleman, had entered the K.C.'s service, between him and his testy patron there was existing an understanding which was almost too good to be true. Sir Andrew Plague, who despised most men and regarded none, actually respected Jonathan. The latter was, of course, a squire in a million—faithful, patient, swift-brained, ridiculously honest. . . . What turned the squire into the compeer—an office no man had ever hitherto filled—was his strength of character. He would stake his job—which is to say, his livelihood—upon a point of principle. He did so stake it a dozen times in the day. The giant in his wrath gave him an unjust order: respectfully enough, Jonathan quietly declined to carry it out. . . . After a little the storms had become less frightful, and twice in the last week Sir Andrew had laughed. (This the steward, who had been told by the butler, flatly refused to credit. But then he was a sceptical fellow, and had served Sir Andrew Plague for twenty years.) There was no doubt about it. Beneath his secretary's influence the leopard was changing his spots. He was, moreover, lying down, not with a kid, but with a blood-horse. Between the two of them a little white dog with a black patch made himself thoroughly at home. . . .

From the very first day Hamlet had taken for granted Sir Andrew's good-will and had proceeded to bask in it. That there was no good-will to bask in did not occur to him. He basked contentedly—and presently had his reward. The good-will was induced.

On the morning after his arrival he had visited the K.C. in his bedroom and had removed one of his slippers at the moment at which the knight, who was at his worst before breakfast, was proposing to insert his foot. Sir Andrew, whom the intrusion had rendered speechless, watched the asportation as a man in a dream. Then he let out a squeal of fury and launched his remaining slipper at Hamlet with the might of a maniac. The terrier sprang upon it in ecstacy and, after shaking it as if it were a

rat, placed one paw upon it and sought to detach the tongue with his teeth. . . . For movement and uproar, the pursuit of a native by a rogue-elephant upon inclosed premises must pale beside the racket of the next five minutes. The household, unable to conceive what was happening, and terrified to go and see, huddled together downstairs: Jonathan, splashing in a distant bathroom, heard nothing at all: and Hamlet, as full of beans as an egg is of meat, decided that as an exponent of horseplay Sir Andrew more nearly approached perfection than anyone he had ever seen. Indeed, after leaving the ravening knight jammed between his bedstead and the floor, and conveying one of the slippers to the library, there to dismember it undisturbed, he determined to repeat so highly successful a visit the following day. Since Sir Andrew slept with his door open, he was able to do this—and did it, with the acme of ease. . . .

At the end of a week the horseplay had been suspended and a compromise reached. Thereafter between seven and eight every morning the Sealyham slept luxuriously upon Sir Andrew's bed. By the time a fortnight had passed, the knight reviled Hamlet if the latter was late. . . .

Of such was life in Kensington Palace Gardens. From being a nightmare it had become a cheerful masque. The old situations cropped up—frequently, but they were always saved.

It was upon the evening of the day upon which he had broken his bell that Sir Andrew laid down the paper and stared into the dusk.

Dinner was over, and the knight was reclining, as was his wont, upon a mighty sofa eminently adapted and, in fact, specially constructed to accommodate his tremendous frame. From behind him a table lamp threw a convenient light directly into his lap. On the floor by his side reposed a silver ash-tray and a cup of cold tea. Opposite, writing at a great table, sat Jonathan Wood. A second table lamp illumined at once his labours and the bowl of his pipe and, when he bent lower than usual, threw his clean-cut profile into sharp relief. For the rest, the room was in darkness. Without an open French window a small white sentinel sat peering down into the garden, motionless, vigilant. Hamlet loved the terrace. It added cubits to his stature. . . .

Suddenly the secretary looked up.

"I quite forgot to ask, sir, how you got on at the dentist's."

Sir Andrew's stare slid into a scowl.

"I didn't," he said.

"But didn't you——"

"I never saw the brute," said Sir Andrew savagely. "He—he was engaged."

Jonathan frowned.

"I was afraid he might be," he said. "You must let me ring up next time and make an appointment."

For a moment the other said nothing.

Then—

Sir Andrew. "I want a name and address. A woman preceded me—probably took my turn, the graceless shrew. Find out who she is."

Jonathan thought very fast.

"I hope . . ." he said tentatively.

"Then don't," snapped Sir Andrew. "Do as you're told instead."

"Very good, sir."



"He declared there was a man on the table, and kept on demanding his name.' 'What table?' said Valerie, staring. 'That one,' said Lady Touchstone . . . 'Whatever's the matter?'"

"Telephone to-morrow morning," he said shortly, regarding the end of his cigar.

"I will," said Jonathan. "When would you like to go?"

"It's not a question of going," replied

There was nothing else to be said, but Jonathan was far from easy. He scented trouble. That the lady had crossed Sir Andrew was perfectly clear. Probably there had been a scene. What worried him was

that the knight's curiosity was never idle. He had some reason for wanting to know her name. Jonathan hoped very much that he was not contemplating a renewal of hostilities. . . .

The terrace growing chill beneath him, Hamlet rose to his feet and entered the room. For a moment he stood as if uncertain: then, with an apologetic look at his governors, he selected the deepest chair, leaped into its arms, and lay as still as death. The strained look in his eyes betrayed his concern lest he should be commanded to seek less luxurious quarters, and when he perceived that Sir Andrew was frowning in his direction, he gave himself up for lost and, laying back velvety ears, started to wag his tail in the hope of charming aside the dreaded sentence.

His fears were groundless.

"Has it ever occurred to you," said Sir Andrew Plague, "that if that dog could speak he could tell you who you are?"

Jonathan sat back in his chair and laid down his pen.

"No, sir," he said. "It hasn't. Why should he? I only found him by chance."

"You found him beside you when—when you recovered consciousness."

"I know. But he had no connection——"

"He was your dog."

Jonathan started.

"I never thought of that," he said slowly.

"That," said Sir Andrew explosively, "is because you don't use your brain. Because you deliberately reduce yourself to the level of the congenital idiot. Ugh. . . . You were in evil case, and so was he. You were dying of hunger, and so was he. You were foul and beastly, so was he. He was your dog."

Jonathan crossed to the chair, picked up Hamlet, sat down and set the terrier upon his knee.

"I wonder," he said, "that never occurred to me." Sir Andrew snorted. "Of course you're right. . . . of course. There's not a shadow of doubt." He looked into the bright, brown eyes. "You know—everything." The Sealyham licked his nose. "You know what happened to me . . . how I came to be starving . . . how——" He broke off and turned to Sir Andrew. "Think of the way he stuck to me," he said suddenly. "I had to carry him that night. He couldn't walk. He must have——"

"Of course he did," said the knight. "You'd fed him before: he expected you to feed him again—the gluttonous brute.

And don't go and get maudlin about it, or you can leave the room."

Jonathan laughed.

"You hear?" he said, pulling the terrier's ears. "You're not faithful at all. You're just a gluttonous brute."

"And a darned ugly one," added Sir Andrew.

"In fact," said Jonathan, smiling, "I can't imagine why we let you sleep on our beds."

Sir Andrew turned a rich plum colour. Then he picked up his cup and drank deep and violently. . . .

As he replaced the vessel—

"How long," he demanded, "are you going on like this?"

"Like what, sir?" said Jonathan.

"Masquerading."

Jonathan raised his eyebrows.

"I'm very happy," he said.

"That," rejoined Sir Andrew, "is beside the point. You can't go through life in a domino."

"I see no reason——"

"Well, I do," snapped the other. "You're guilty of *suggestio falsi*, and I'm abetting you. Not that I care about that," he added fiercely. "My back's broad enough—and to spare. But it's—it's out of order."

"So long as you don't mind, sir, I'd rather stay as I am."

"Under an assumed name?"

Jonathan shrugged his shoulders.

"If I knew who I was," he said, "and deliberately concealed my identity, that would be one thing. But I'm doing nothing of the kind. I'm hiding nothing. I've nothing to hide. I don't know who I am, and I don't care."

"Others may," said his patron. "Supposing you're married?"

"I've thought of that," said his secretary, "and, frankly, the idea frightens me to death."

"I daresay it does," said Sir Andrew. "But what of that?"

"Well, sir, you see. . . ."

Jonathan hesitated.

"Proceed," said Sir Andrew mercilessly.

Jonathan set down the Sealyham and crossed his legs.

"I don't think I *can* be married," he said desperately.

"Why?"

"I know so little of women."

"That's no argument."

Jonathan laughed.

"Well," he said, "if I am, surely it's

better that I should stick to my domino until my memory returns."

"Why?"

"Well, sir, supposing a girl was suddenly produced to you, and you were bluntly informed that she was your wife. . . ."

"I should take appropriate action."

"So, I hope, should I. But it 'ld be fearfully awkward—for both of us."

"Why?"

Jonathan decided to plunge.

"Well, I shouldn't—shouldn't love her, you know."

Sir Andrew let out a squeal of agony.

"Ugh!" he raged. "Ugh, you maundering fool!" He covered his eyes and waved the other away. "Didn't you undertake to mend your ways? Didn't you swear you 'ld eschew all sickly sentiment? Ugh, you make my gorge rise! 'Love'? A poet's licence! A libertine's excuse! Besides, you might. You're fool enough, Heaven knows."

"Have a care, sir," cried Jonathan, laughing. "Don't drive the gods too far."

Sir Andrew sat up and looked at him.

"D'you want the sack?" he demanded.

"I do not," said Jonathan.

"Then hold your tongue," roared the other. "And don't squirt venom at me."

"I only said—"

"You made a most vulgar suggestion. You implied that my mind was diseased—that that disgusting emotion to which you just now referred could infect my reason."

"I'm perfectly sure," said his secretary, "that the woman you delighted to honour would have to—"

"She 'ld have to change her sex," was the grim reply. "Only to-day I was subjected to the grossest insult at a woman's hands." Jonathan repressed a start. "A most respectable-looking female proved to be a harridan of the very worst type. For no reason whatever she reviled me."

"Reviled you?"

"Reviled me," said Sir Andrew, rising. "Most foully. Omitting no circumstance of indignity. I tell you, I was amazed. She actually accused me of brawling."

Jonathan swallowed.

"She can't have known—"

"Oh, yes, she did! She defined it most accurately. She even referred to a leading case on the subject."

"But what had you done, sir?"

"Done, you fool? Nothing. She heard me correct a cabman. The swine demanded compensation, alleging that I'd

broken his springs. I rebuked the man—naturally. Then I passed into that swab of a dentist's waiting-room, to be pounced upon by this—this scold." The lawyer began to stride up and down the room. His secretary, who had a pretty good idea of Sir Andrew's methods of reproof of cabmen and entrance into rooms, began to see daylight. "At first," continued the latter, warming, as he went on, "I could hardly believe my ears. Then, so soon as I could speak, I demurred. . . . My protests were interrupted, infamously perverted and ignored. When I sought to point out that my rights to the user of the room were co-equal with hers, she made ready to swoon. Of common decency I let the point go, to be told I was 'a menace to society.'"

"A menace. . . ."

"The vixen's words," said Sir Andrew. "You could have knocked me down. I tell you, Wood, it was a perfectly hellish business. Indeed, I can only think that, presumably mad with pain, the creature resented my intrusion and lost her balance. Mercifully, I kept my head and, at the expense of my dignity, calmed her before—before I left. She actually wandered towards the end. Poor woman, it was most distressing. She seemed to think I had emerged from a public-house."

With a fearful effort Jonathan subdued an impulse to yell with laughter. Wholly absorbed in his outrageous retrospection, the K.C. proceeded, frowning.

"Yes. The more I think of it, the more satisfied I am that she was temporarily deranged. Indeed, she referred to the house as 'a place of mental affliction.' Therefore I blame myself. . . . Not that I replied to her abuse. That course, as I have indicated, was denied me. . . . But I should have humoured her, Wood. . . . She spoke of bull-rings and confessionals—in the same breath. Of course I was taken by surprise. And instinctively I strove to defend myself against what I fairly considered to be an unprovoked and provocative assault. Did I tell you she styled me a brute?"

"No, sir"—incredulously.

"She did," said Sir Andrew, wiping the sweat from his brow. "Twice. I tell you the woman was possessed—like the Gadarene swine."

"And, to judge," said Jonathan, eager to encourage this lenient view of the affair, "to judge from her behaviour, by the same

tenants. Only, last time it was a place they ran violently down."

Sir Andrew laughed. Then he knitted his brows. "Be that as it may," he said, "her frenzy took the form of vituperation. And I feel that, as she was unattended and, so far as I know, I am the only being who witnessed her—her humiliation, it would be becoming if—er—if I inquired after her health."

"Coals of fire," said Jonathan, stroking his chin.

"Er—perhaps. You see, I have no wish to be thought unsympathetic. I should like it to be understood that I bear her no ill-will. I should like her to realise that if my manner was somewhat—er—stilted, that was due to my failure to appreciate her plight. . . . I—er—I feel—er . . ."

To interrupt Sir Andrew was, speaking generally, to invite, if not personal violence, at any rate execration of a very unpleasant sort. Here, however, it would have been plainly brutal to do anything else. He who was never at a loss for an expression was searching desperately for words.

"I'll find out her name to-morrow," said Jonathan Wood.

He retired that night, blessing the anonymous lady and all her works. Whatever her shortcomings, she had proved herself a red herring of conspicuous merit. . . .

* * * * *

When, two days later, Sir Andrew, who was standing in a cool drawing-room, awaiting his hostess's appearance, perspiring with great freedom and savagely asking himself why the devil he had come, perceived a large photograph of his secretary handsomely framed and sharing a Louis XV. table with a blotter and a Lowestoft bowl full of roses, he stood as though rooted to the floor. Then he went backward, caught his foot against an ebony stool, lost his balance and, with a rattling oath, fell into the miniature palmarium which had till then been 'camouflaging' the hearth.

It was at this juncture that Lady Touchstone, wondering who 'Sir Andrew Plague' might be and what he wanted, opened the door. . . .

For a moment she thought the room was empty.

Then—

"Ten thousand devils," said a familiar voice. "Ugly ones."

Lady Touchstone started violently and caught at a chair.

"Where are you?" she said faintly.

"Behind the sofa," said Sir Andrew, making frantic endeavours to rise. "Who's that man on the table?"

"Wh—what man?" stammered his hostess, staring about her.

"Sitting with Hamlet in his lap," cried Sir Andrew prising himself out of the foliage.

"Hamlet?" shrieked Lady Touchstone. "'Hamlet'? Oh, he's mad," she continued, thinking aloud and trembling violently.

"No, he isn't," roared Plague. "He's lost his memory."

By a superhuman effort Lady Touchstone retained a hold upon her wits. . . . Valerie was out: the servants were not within call. It was a case for strategy.

"Has he?" she said, smiling. "How very awkward!"

"He doesn't find it so," said Plague, staring. "As a matter of fact, he rather likes it. At the present moment he's my secretary. What's his name?"

Lady Touchstone side-stepped, as if by accident, towards the door.

"Oh, I shouldn't bother about his name," she said gaily. "What's—er—what's in a name?"

Sir Andrew choked.

"But—but you know him!" he cried, jerking his head at the table. "You must. Don't you want to hear news of him? I tell you he's in my service."

"Of course he is," said Lady Touchstone. "Oh, and devoted to you," she added ecstatically.

"Madam," said Plague, trembling, "this pleasantry is ill-timed. If that man means nothing to you—"

"But he does," cried Lady Touchstone earnestly, regarding the Louis XV. table with starting eyes. "He does indeed."

"Then don't you want," raved Sir Andrew, "to know where he is?"

"I'd—I'd give anything," wailed Lady Touchstone, frenziedly trying to preserve her mental poise.

"Well, I can tell you," roared Plague. "I've just left him. He's in Kensington Palace Gardens."

Lady Touchstone's brain reeled.

Then—

"I know," she said brightly. "A charming spot. So open. I always think the air there—"

The look upon Sir Andrew's face cut short the sentence.

Twice the giant strove to speak—ineffectually.

At length—

"There," he said thickly, "the air is at least sincere. If we care for nobody, at least we do not advertise a regard which we

"Is that Sir Andrew Plague's?" cried Valerie French. "It is," said Anthony Lyveden."



As he passed into the hall—

"Stop!" cried Lady Touchstone. "What on earth do you mean?"

Sir Andrew swung on his heel.

"Mean?"

"Mean. I thought you were mad." Sir

Andrew recoiled. "You said there was a man on the table and—other things. But never mind. Why am I insincere?"

"I said there was a man on the table?"

"You did indeed," said Lady Touchstone. "With Macbeth in his arms."

Plague started against the wall.

"I—said—that?"

"You did."

Sir Andrew looked wildly about him. Then he clapped his hands to his head.

"Then it's time I was gone," he said shakily.

"He seized his hat and stick. 'I must be mad—raving. My fall. . . .'"

He lurched to the flat's door, opened it, blundered almost into the arms of Valerie French, muttered an apology and stumbled uncertainly downstairs. . . .

Valerie stood in the doorway, watching him go, wide-eyed.

do not feel." He passed to the door. "Madam, I take my leave. Why I came is of no consequence. I regret extremely that I should have disarranged your ferns, and still more that I should have revived an acquaintance which I shall strive to forget."

Presently she turned to her aunt.

"What on earth. . . ."

"That," said Lady Touchstone faintly, "is the man. The one I met at the dentist's."

"But what—"

"Don't ask me," wailed her aunt, putting

a hand to her head, "because I can't tell you. One of us is insane." She passed into the drawing-room and sank into a chair. "I came into this room to find him behind the sofa—enumerating ill-favoured devils."

"What?"

"It's a fact," said Lady Touchstone. "Then he began to see things. He declared there was a man on the table, and kept on demanding his name."

"What table?" said Valerie, staring.

"That one," said Lady Touchstone, pointing to the Louis XV. "He said he was in his service, and didn't I want to hear of him. All the time, as I tell you, he kept on demanding his name. As if I— What-ever's the matter?"

Vouchsafing no answer, Valerie flashed from the room. A moment later she was flying downstairs. . . .

Hill Street appeared to be empty.

With a beating heart she rushed to the nearest corner. . . .

Upon being interrogated, the policeman had seen no one at all corresponding to

her description of Sir Andrew Plague. Desperately she turned and ran in the opposite direction. . . .

After a fruitless ten minutes she burst into the flat.

Weakly her aunt regarded her.

"What was his name?" panted Valerie.

"What was his name?"

The revival of this terrible query confirmed Lady Touchstone's worst fears. Insanity was in the air.

With an unearthly shriek she clapped her hands over her ears and subsided upon the floor. . . .

As a servant came running—

"What," said Valerie, "was that gentleman's name?"

For a moment the man hesitated.

Then—

"Sir Andrew Plague, miss."

A second later Valerie was at the telephone. . . .

After an interminable delay—

"Is that Sir Andrew Plague's?" cried Valerie French.

"It is," said Anthony Lyveden.

A further instalment of this story will appear in the next number.

THE DITCHER.

THERE goes a ditcher of the narrow lanes,
His bright spade shouldered at the long day's end,
By the round pool and harbour of clear rains
That from the hill descend.

His labour cleans the narrow watercourse
That fills the pool where now, for watering,
Their laggard chain of heavy-footed horse
The weary ploughmen bring.

The draughts of water to the horse seem wine
Where in the green-rimmed bowl knee-deep they wade,
And see behind him like a halo shine
His gravel-burnished spade.

WILFRID THORLEY.

RUTH RAILWAY-ARCH

By CHERRY VEHEYNE

ILLUSTRATED BY E. G. OAKDALE

A CABFUL of flowers had been taken to the hospitals, but still the luxurious room was full of them, breathing out the perfumed memory of last night's triumph, when London had welcomed the great dancer whom she had reared but never heard of until fame sent her name back across the sea. Ruth Warren had left London unknown and friendless; she returned to an enthusiastic welcome and a rapturous endorsement of the success she had won abroad. Last night had been the crown of her long years of effort, the seal upon her art. Never could she have conceived herself upon the pinnacle of success unless London, her own London, acclaimed her.

Yet now her dreams had come true, and she stood amid the trophies of her victory, she was curiously depressed. It was doubtless the reaction from excitement, but she found herself thinking of her loneliness, and asking what good was success when she had none to share it. Several people who had barely known her in the past had now written reminding her of old friendships, but their interested advances only emphasised her friendlessness. She had not felt it hitherto, being heart and soul in her work and having her goal ahead, but now she had attained all she had ever hoped for, life seemed suddenly flat.

She stood gazing out of the window, watching the rain descend in a grey sheet of water that seemed to flood the whole world with dreariness. Just on such a day it was that Devigne had come like a fairy godmother into her life. She shivered as her mind went back to the time when she was a neglected urchin at the mercy of a drunken mother, often cold, often hungry, sometimes beaten, happy only when the barrel-organ came into the squalid neighbourhood and put music into her feet and poetry into her little body, a forgetful smile on her lips. It was thus that Devigne had found her. Several famous artistes had

been appearing in a *matinée* at a near-by hall in aid of the sufferers in some local catastrophe which had aroused widespread sympathy. Devigne and another *matinée* idol, dodging autograph hunters, had slipped out of a back door and walked through the pelting rain to where their car waited, and, doing so, they passed the gloomy archway in whose shelter danced Ruth Warren, a ragged little fairy, keeping herself warm and whiling away the storm in her own fashion.

She remembered how abashed she had been to discover herself observed by these two strange beings, so unlike man as she knew him. She had stared in amaze when, to encourage her, Devigne had executed a few steps and invited her to imitate them, an amazement that merged into delight as she watched his light feet and lithe airy movements, whilst his companion leaned back against the wall and laughed much at the spectacle of Devigne, billed as the world's greatest dancer, dancing under an East End railway arch with a little ragamuffin for partner.

He had danced once or twice with her, after that, at the training school where he had placed her, and she had been taken to the theatre to see his performance, where his glad scenas had set her small feet pattering in unison, and his tragic dances had set her gasping in emotional agony, to the satisfaction of those who were interested in her career.

He went out of her life before she made her first appearance as a juvenile performer, a year or two before that portion of her earnings demanded by her mother, and paid by those who had charge of her, proved too much for Mrs. Warren's weakness, and over-indulgence in her favourite beverage led to death.

By the time Ruth was supporting herself in comfort, and making steady headway in her profession, aware of the debt she owed Devigne and longing to thank him, he had

disappeared, and now his name was never heard.

She moved away from the window and took up a photograph which occupied the centre of the mantelpiece wherever she might be. This picture of Devigne had come to be more to her than she was convinced any living man could ever be. On to the delight of his dancing and the wonder of his kindness which formed her childish memories of him were engrafted her later understanding of his art and her appreciation of his generosity, his spontaneous recognition and support of talent.

"No success abroad was a real success," she told herself. "Only London mattered. And now I'm all I ever dreamed of being, it seems I can never feel a real success until Devigne approves. After all, there has been no successor to him. Apart from what he is to me, his praise is the highest I could obtain."

Her thoughts ran with regret on the disappearance of her benefactor and hero, the disappointment of never meeting him, until she scolded herself for her ingratitude to fortune, and took alarm lest she forgot how kind Fate had been to her.

"If I ever forget all I have and all I might have lacked," she said, "I deserve to go hungry for the rest of my days."

She was stern with herself on this point, having observed the numerous people who, their highest ambitions gratified, immediately develop fresh ones, and derive no satisfaction from the fulfilment of the old. She intended never to forget the fate which might have been hers, never to cease to be thankful for her good fortune. To this end she put on stout boots and a raincoat, slipped out into the street unobserved, and took a 'bus going east.

Half an hour later she was walking again in the streets where once she ran about neglected and unhappy, and she shivered as the past closed in miserable recollection about her.

"If only I also could find someone to befriend!" she thought. "I must, some day, to pay my own debt."

She made her way, after wandering in the wet for some time, to that railway arch where Devigne had discovered her, and stood staring into its bleak shelter, with the wind buffeting her and the rain hissing along the gutter at her feet. She could scarcely tear herself away; never before had she realised the kindness of her lot. She felt that when again she stepped into

her flower-decked room and wrapped herself in dry, beautiful clothes, she would cry for very joy at the contrast of what was with what might have been. When at length, with the water dripping from her hat, she turned away, it was not to return home, but in an endeavour to find that hideous tenement which she had once inhabited, that she might the more fully revel in her happy escape.

The streets were almost deserted, and the few pedestrians fled bent before the slanting downpour. She came to tall, ugly dwellings which did not look like those of her childish days, though she fancied they must be the same. As she hesitated, a child shot out of a doorway opposite, and with an exclamation which brought Ruth round to face her, stood with her little hands clutched together, looking this way and that in piteous dismay and terror, obviously uncertain where to run and yet urged by some great necessity.

"What is it, sweetheart?" asked Ruth, swiftly by her side, peering down into the little thin face, where frightened tears mingled with the rain that beat mercilessly upon her bare head.

"Daddy! Daddy!" she gasped. "He's not drunk—he's not drunk! He's crying, and nobody will come!"

"Tell me," Ruth took her hand and went with her back into the doorway from which she had hurled herself.

"There was no breakfast or dinner at all to-day, and I told Daddy I was hungry, and——" She paused, and made quick, little excited gestures with her hands in default of the words that failed her. "I've often said I wanted my dinner before, but when I said I was hungry—Daddy—Daddy"—she struggled again, and her eyes dilated—"Daddy said it after me," she gasped. "He said—*hungry*—and he looked . . . Mrs. Hewitt's just slammed her door, and Mrs. Baker wouldn't take any notice, but he's not drunk—he's not drunk!"

She began to sob, her teeth chattering, and Ruth's eyes were full as she took the little hands and tried to still their trembling. "Shall I come back with you?" she asked. "If Daddy's ill, perhaps I can help."

"Oh, yes, please—oh, yes, please!"

She clung to the hand which held hers, and ran panting up the many flights of stone stairs, dragging Ruth after her. Her clothes were dirty and torn, but her speech relieved Ruth of any fear of encountering some low ruffian, though she was slightly



“‘Your little girl thought you were ill,’ she stammered, ‘and she said no one would come . . . She was so distressed . . .’”

embarrassed at the thought of intruding herself upon a man of education, however low drink had brought him, and she would have been extremely nervous but for her overwhelming sympathy for the frightened child.

The man lay with his head on his arms on a bare table, in a pose of such utter abandonment that for a moment Ruth's heart stopped beating, and she drew the child closer to her side, breathing a sigh of relief when he stirred, and her first vague fear was dispelled.

He lifted his head, disclosing a haggard face dark with a three days' growth of beard, dark hair tossed wildly across his forehead, and a look in his eyes that sent a shiver through her, for it was that of a man who had looked into his own soul and been horrified at the sight.

The little girl sprang to him and was caught in his arms and kissed. She held his face in her cold hands and looked searchingly at it.

"I thought you were crying, Daddy, and you wouldn't show me your face," she said. "I'm sorry I said I was hungry." His arms tightened about her, and he winced, casting a look at Ruth which was more shamed than questioning.

"Your little girl thought you were ill," she stammered, "and she said no one would come. She was so distressed."

"I'm afraid you wouldn't have come, either, if—you knew me as well as they," he returned, low, though his eyes met hers.

There was a silence, and Ruth was at a loss, wishing to help and fearing to offend. "I used to live here," she said then, "when I was a little girl. I have been out of England a long time. I wonder if you would let me take your little girl back to tea with me? I would send her safely home again."

"You used to live here?" he repeated, in surprise.

"Yes. Devigne, the great dancer, saw me and had me trained, and I have been very lucky."

He sat back. "What is your name?" he asked.

"Ruth Warren."

He said nothing, only sat with his head bent, plainly disturbed.

"Daddy dances when — when — sometimes," burst forth the child. "Everybody comes to watch him." He put his hand quickly over her mouth, flushing a dusky red, then removed it and answered the charge.

"I am a famous character hereabouts, you see," he said quietly, "because the other men fight when they are drunk, and I dance. You are sorry for my little girl, I can see, and so I want you to know that I will look after her better in the future. She never told me until to-day that she was hungry." His face paled, and he halted a moment before he could go on. "I cannot tell you what it is like to know you have left a child to hunger. . ."

He turned his head aside, so that the light from the dirty window fell athwart his features and outlined the curve of his bare throat.

Ruth stared and made a hasty step forward.

"Your name?" she exclaimed, and waited with parted lips.

"Somers," he returned, but avoided her gaze. Her heart was beating.

"But were you never billed as Devigne?" she asked, and he rose and stood with his nervous fingers scratching at the table. "Oh, forgive me," she said, "but I owe you so much!"

"Not me, not me," he returned. "Forget you have recognised me. I died—oh, nearly seven years ago!"

"Never to me. If you will come back with me now, you will see your portrait on my mantelpiece, where it has always been. I have so wanted to thank you. I don't know how to begin."

"I know the success you have won; that proves I did no more than I ought."

"Then please let me help you now, Mr. Devigne, and I shall do less than I ought." She blushed. "Oh, it seems so impertinent for me to offer you help, but you have had bad luck."

"Seven years ago, when Marjorie was not a year old. And I wasn't man enough to bear it. I'd been spoiled, I suppose."

"You—you lost your wife?"

"Yes, but not by death until a couple of years ago, and by that time—it didn't matter."

She was shocked into silence, but at the back of her mind went a wondering speculation as to what kind of a woman could have deserted that fairy-prince-like Devigne who had won his way into more hearts than her childish one.

"Daddy, shall we go to tea with this lady?" asked Marjorie, trying bravely to keep the eagerness out of her voice. He looked at Ruth with shamed eyes.

"Oh, will you not come?" she asked,

and his lips were unsteady, though he pressed them together.

"No, I can't," he said at last. "Wait until I have reinstated myself a little. At present I want to go on hiding until I have wiped out the worst of these last few years."

"But will you not permit me to repay a little of what I owe you? Until you get back again. . . ."

"You may take Marjorie, if you will. If I know she is safe for a few weeks, I think I shall soon be able to send for her and look after her."

"May I? Oh, thank you so much." Her eyes sparkled. This was so like a reversal of their past rôles that she was delighted. "Will you come and stay with me, Marjorie, until Daddy can send for you to a nicer place than this?"

He took the child on his knee, as she hesitated between conflicting emotions, and stroked her hair back with the thin, expressive hands which Ruth remembered for the potent part they played in his art. It was evident that he had never been consciously unkind to his daughter, but was her idol and hero, even as he had been Ruth's twelve years ago, and the child consented to the separation more for his sake than her own, despite its advantages.

Ruth took her out to a rough coffee-shop round the corner, and when they returned, Devigne had shaved himself as well as he could with a chipped razor, and despite the ravages of the past few years and his threadbare clothes, he looked very like his old self, only the glad boyishness had gone from him, leaving him worn and ill-looking. Whilst Marjorie, full of hot cocoa and stodgy cake, rushed to say good-bye to various people, Ruth begged him to accept a loan to assist him over the first steps of his recovery.

"You will not use your own name for a while until you can produce your best work again," she said, "and it will delay you so much unless you will allow me to return a little of my debt."

"There is no debt. I am proud to have had anything to do with your career. And I have had to work occasionally, you know, when my pockets were empty. When I have seen you and Marjorie home, I will go straight away and offer myself for regular work. I shall have no difficulty in obtaining it, such as it is."

"Oh, but why waste time in such places?"

"It will not be wasted time. It will buy

me a decent suit of clothes, it will give me leisure to work up an act, and it will teach me to stand on my own feet. I didn't before. My wife was a well-known dancer, and helped me over my hard times. I'll take them now, and if I regain my position, I shall perhaps have learned to trust myself again."

"It will be such a little time, I'm sure," she rejoined, regarding him with shining eyes. Every moment he seemed to grow more like the Devigne she had known and dreamt of, only his shame and resolve made him more humanly lovable than he had ever been as fairy prince and great artist. The dismal day and the dismal room both seemed miraculously transformed when he smiled and said—

"I'll borrow the 'bus fares, if you like, Ruth Railway-Arch"—which was the name he had laughingly given her long ago—"because otherwise I can't see you home."

They were a cheerful trio as they rode in the crowded 'bus westwards, and though the rain still descended pitilessly, Ruth's world was golden.

"Please do come in and have tea," she said, as they stood in the doorway of her hotel, and the momentary anxiety in her eyes expressed her troubled remembrance of his fasting condition.

"No, not now," he said. "You say my portrait is on your mantelpiece. I'll come when I can look like it again. Until then I want you to be good enough to send me a line about Marjorie each week." He looked down at his daughter and then stooped and kissed her. "Be very good, sweetheart. I'm going to work so hard, so that I can see you soon."

"Where are you going now, Daddy?"

"To dance for my supper, first, and afterwards for you"—he held out his hand to Ruth—"and so that I can come and see my pupil in all her glory," he added.

"In all her gratitude," returned Ruth, and did not withdraw her hand, though she blushed.

"Good-bye, Ruth Railway-Arch," he said softly. "Please keep my photograph where it is, and don't let Marjorie forget me until I can come and have tea with you."

She watched him stride away down the gloomy wet road, tears in her eyes and an ache in her heart; yet when Marjorie, surreptitiously brushing her own tears away, questioned her, she said they were tears of joy.



ONE LIGHT

SUNSET and dawn shall never see
Each other's clear felicity
Of lovely light ;
Sundered by day's processional hours,
One leaps from darkness, the other cowers
Into the night.



Yet are they both the eternal round
In sequence ordered and profound
Across time's verge,
And, farther than all shadows reach,
Upon some planetary beach
They meet and merge.



So life and death upon some shore
Unknown—and never seen before
They merge and meet—
May be one light, divided here
By shadowy interchange of fear,
And incomplete.

WALLACE B. NICHOLS.

DUEL

By MAUD STEPNEY RAWSON

ILLUSTRATED BY C. FLEMING WILLIAMS

THE god of Materialism, Worldly Prosperity, and Big Business stalked through a wide Swiss valley, purring as he contemplated his work and particularly his latest achievement—the magnificent Hotel Majestic on its little plateau above the little town which he had converted into a flourishing centre of winter sports. And as he stroked, with a fat, giant finger, its shining lead cupolas, its gorgeous white façade, and the sleek heads of manager, chefs, and cashiers, he tossed his challenge up to a snowy peak. Thereon sat the Spirit of Imagination, spinning, spinning with a dreamy smile.

"They don't want your poor notions, your threadbare suggestions, these humans," he scoffed. "They don't need your fantasies. They want to get rid of emotion and plunge into sensations. I'll pulp 'em all down into complacency and give 'em just enough ambition to keep 'em as my slaves. Your old shuttle can't touch 'em while I've got 'em on gold chains."

"I'll fight you to the end," whispered Imagination. He didn't hear, for he was stalking on to conquer a fresh field. But behind his back her threads went floating into the valley. One lassoed an old valedudinarian, who, because he had a chilblain, determined that gangrene was setting in, and sent for lawyers and doctors. Another thread caught a modern poet in the woods and induced a bad attack of swelled head. The third curled cunningly through the door of the Majestic, penetrated the lounge, and enmeshed an oddly-contrasted couple.

The girl was small, with dark bobbed hair and gentian eyes set in rather a pale, square face. Her dress was of the simplest: straight-cut, loosely belted. Student of the Arts was written in every line of her.

The man was large-limbed, well-covered, ruddy, immaculately, suitably dressed for the occasion—afternoon tea after the day's sport. And what a repast! Cakes that melted in your mouth, a special brew of

caravan tea, of which the man had a store in his own special suite of rooms, and which he occasionally condescended to share with friends.

To-day he had only this one guest. He had deliberately shut out the rest, including his "crêpe-de-chine squad," as he termed the bevy of pretty girls in the hotel. He had flirted with all of them and patronised their families. They bored him with their adulation, their sameness. So he had picked out this little thing because she was different, because her aloofness and abstraction piqued him. The others were all jogging along in the right way, from his point of view. They were busily on the make, they were well befriended and endowed. She was alone and obviously poor. What was she doing in this gorgeous caravanserai, this complete village within a town, this wonderful public palace, with its garages, its colonnades of special shops, its rink, ballroom, gymnasium, swimming-bath, and covered tennis courts? He set about catechising her, playing her like a fish in his usual way, infallible as he deemed it. It was some time before he discovered that his little fish had turned the tables.

"Yes," he assured her, "I've made all this." He included hotel, wings, and outbuildings in one grandiloquent gesture. "It's all the work of one mind, one pair of hands."

The jazz orchestra crashed one of its ugly, tuneless themes to a full close as he spoke. From the crowded tea-tables arose an outburst of clapping. His triumphant, full eyes swept them; his lips, proudly smiling, seemed to say: "This applause is for me—*me*."

Followed a short (comparative) silence. Then came a stream of real music. It was her laugh, ripple on ripple, up the scale and down, up again, then lower, softening to a long, delicious gurgle, as of mountain water set free to trickle and bubble and eddy till it found silence in a windless pool.

That made the silence more actual. The tea-gorgers craned their necks; figures seated or upright turned simultaneously, like automatons, to fathom the source of that mirth.

"There now, they're all looking at us," said the ruddy man complacently.

"At you, you mean," she corrected roguishly. "At least, that's what you wanted to say, Mr. Bonamy Barton."

"I didn't," he began, and then he was ashamed. Somehow, you could not lie to this child. Besides, she was right. Why be ashamed? That was what he was "out for"—to be marked. To be the focus of attention meant one continuous "ad."—meant business, and business was power. Further, no one could want to look much at this little girl. She wasn't dashing or a "catch" in any sense.

"Just as you like," he continued indulgently, to hide fleeting embarrassment. "But what made you laugh, just like that, just then, Miss Fantessor?"

"You," she said simply.

"Ah!" The word was heavy with satisfaction and challenge. "It does take your breath away a bit, all this, I guess."

"It does, it does." She put down hastily the trifle of marzipan she nibbled. She was struggling with something, put her hand to her ivory throat as if in pain.

"Sip some lukewarm tea," he commanded.

"It—wouldn't make any—difference," she gasped, and covered her mouth with a pretty little handkerchief.

The sprite in her eyes betrayed her. By the time the jazz band had embarked on another of its wild panjandruns, the truth was slowly filtering into his brain. She was laughing at *him*.

He was furious, could have shaken her, taken her by the arm, conducted her to her room, wherever that was, and condemned her to solitary confinement and a diet of snow-water and black bread. But that would have been beneath his dignity and bad for business. Moreover, it would have left her the victor, the injured, helpless creature in the eyes of this stupid, necessary-to-prosperity crowd and the indispensable sensation-loving Press. Crowds are always sentimental, the Press is useful.

"Awfully glad to amuse you," he retorted fiercely. "That's part of my work, too. But I should like to know exactly what is at the back of your mind."

"Oh, that's a jungle, a wonder forest." She baffled him in that style for a good five minutes, concluding: "I often wish I knew myself what is in those backwoods of my mind. Perhaps it's more fun as it is—like a bran pie. I'm always dipping into it and pulling out something unexpected. But that's just part of the whole miracle of existence—this and everything."

"Then you do acknowledge that I have achieved big things?"

She skirmished no longer. Out into the open she came, head on to the attack, like a wren at an ox.

"You? Well, yes, in a degree. You're only part of a great wonder mechanism, a servant of the great Miracle Maker. You're a very good craftsman in your section, I'm sure. But look at all the others—the people who make the things in this place and keep them going. Take your master plumber, for instance—he's a marvel. Then there's a little bootmender, back of one of these grand shops of yours, who is a great artist. And that Swiss girl who regulates all the hotel clocks for her blind father—"

"Well, 'pon my soul!"

"Come! That's better. I knew you had one somewhere, Mr.—er—Big Business."

"You flatter me."

"I hoped it was real—your soul. You see, I'm out for something, too."

"Aha! Struck a good streak?"

"Lots."

"Now, then, we're talking sense. What is it? A new line? Got some good tip? Just tell me. I won't give it away, and I'll see if I can boost it. I might back it."

"'Back' it, do. But 'boost' it? Good Heavens, no!"

"Look here, young woman, what *are* you doing in this show?"

"I'm gleaning," she answered softly. "Just picking up little sprays of gold here and there—ideas, fancies, thoughts. That's my real life."

"How do you turn it into £.S.D.? Cinema notes, journalese, scribbling, painting?"

"I don't turn it into material gold."

"But—but you have to live, and this place is costly."

"Oh, that!" She dismissed the matter with a contemptuous wave of her small hand. "That's my earth life, my 'pavement life,' as I call it. I help the management in all sorts of ways. I devise diversions for the crowd—sketch out the week's programme,

ski parties, competitions, sleigh parties and picnic routes, fancy dress dances. I see to the table flowers, the coming Christmas decorations. If anyone is in trouble over a fancy costume, I'm called in to suggest ideas and contrive a guise. If a cotillion is afoot, I choose the tokens and make out a list of the figures. Then I link up the pensions and hotels, and arrange an interchange of festivities generally, and so on."

"And for this you get a jolly good screw?"

"I get a top room in that last annexe, my board and laundry, return ticket to England, and a pound a week."

"Sakes! Why did you let the management beat you down?"

"They didn't. It was their offer. I am quite satisfied."

"You can afford to make so little profit?"

"The management has no idea of the riches I am picking up. Look at the ideas, the fantasy! Why, those mountains alone are gold hoards to me! I shall be able to draw on the memory of those for the rest of my life, wherever I am."

"What for?"

"To help. To carry on. To re-embody them, if I can, in all sorts of ways. Make life into a fairy tale which never grows stale."

"What sort of embodying?"

She retreated behind her mischief as before. "Ask the moon, the waters, and the wild growing things."

"Well, I'm dashed! That leads nowhere. You'll never 'arrive' like that."

"Don't want to. Always travelling, always reaching marvellous out-of-the-way heights or little nooks. Curling up for a short time to enjoy. Then on again."

The jazz band clattered to a finish once more, and there was a general movement.

"Gracious!" cried the girl. "It must be six, and I ought to be down on the pavement again. There's a pillow-and-sheet masque on to-night, and I have to serve out the linen."

"You count this as the upper air, then?" asked her host, as they rose.

"Nearly. Not quite. Well, good-bye, Mr. Big Business, and thanks ever so."

"Good-bye for the present, Miss—Fantasy," she scoffed genially.

She clapped her hands softly, crying over her shoulder as she flitted: "I'd rather have that name than any."

Bonamy Barton was not taking part in the queer masque that evening. After watching the now ludicrous, now ingenious ways to which pillow-cases and sheets had been put as disguises by the dancers, he did not wait for the hour of unmasking, but strolled along to his favourite nook by the manager's bureau. A shocking draught poured down from some upper storey, so he went up to investigate, and traced it to a little rest-room for ladies. It was seldom used, and was empty now, apparently. It was unlighted as he strode in and stumbled over a chair covered with loose sheets of music.

"Oh, you have broken the spell!" sighed a voice.

He pulled up, to discover Miss Fantasy kneeling by the deep window.

"You? Mad! That open window at this hour—thermometer thirty degrees below freezing!"

"I'm as warm as a toast, and I was so happy, pulling music down from the stars and the peaks to meet some lovely words."

"All right," he shrugged, "I'll go. But there'll be a funeral soon."

"The management will do it handsomely, I'm sure," she returned. "But—it might be bad for business here. So, to relieve your mind——" She closed the window.

He switched on the light, saw the open piano.

"Going to publish some pretty noises?"

"No, no—only weaving. The words aren't popular." She huddled her scattered papers jealously together.

"I'd like to hear, then, though I'm not much good at poetry. Read 'em to me."

She looked unutterable things.

"They are by George Macdonald; no one you ever heard of. I somehow can't read them aloud—to you. Here's the last verse, typed clearly. I'll just play while you look at them."

She slipped on to the piano stool. Before the astonished handsome eyes of Big Business wavered these lines:

O God of mountains, stars and boundless spaces!

O God of freedom and of joyous hearts!

When Thy face looketh forth from all men's faces,

There will be room enough in crowded marts.

Brood Thou around me, and the noise is o'er.

Thy Universe my closet with shut door.

It was rather terrifying, creepy—sort of wrong-headed, too. There was a nice open-air kind of feeling about it somewhere; still, the world could never go on if you lived in a kind of mental cell.

B.B. wanted to laugh, yet he felt ashamed, just as he did once at Long Island, as a college youth, when a beach preacher pitched on him and asked him to lead "Rock of Ages."

"This child has got a 'pi' stunt on, that's all," he assured himself, fidgeting uneasily as he endured the music politely. But slowly it enfolded him. His fidgeting ceased. Her small, sweet voice wrapped the words about him. He felt the room grow too hot, too confined. He tiptoed

engine to spoil the music of cataracts, not a pump or wheel to jar the harmony. He kneeled at the window as she had done. He dreamed.

When he returned to the "pavement," the piano was closed, the room empty. He rose, rubbed his neck wryly. A stiff neck, a cold to follow—bad for business. He was due at Lausanne to-morrow to inspect a site for a super-cinema, then must hurry on to Milan to squeeze the best possible terms out of a bankrupt nobleman whose palazzo in the Apennines would, converted, make the first hydro in Europe. Then he would just have a flick at enterprises in Florence, and so on. But he must be back at this particular Majestic for the New Year. He ran downstairs, shivering, to order hot grog and tell his valet to prepare a special anti-rheumatic bath.

While sipping the grog in the vestibule, he ran into Miss Fantasy, busy at a table with pencil and map.

"You let me down badly up there, Miss Mischief,"



"B.B. lay on his face."

to the window, set it open. "Stars and boundless spaces." Boundless! Not a roof or a factory chimney to mar them, not an

he grumbled. "I'm in for a howling chill."

"Nonsense, Mr. Big Bear. I closed the

window. I had only been gone two minutes when you awoke."

"You didn't close it."

"I did. Besides, I switched on the heater directly I began to play, and left it on."

"Anyway, I'm in for a chill," he snorted.

"You're not. It's an idea. One of the wrong sort. Oh, I see! You are developing imagination, fantasy. Hooray!"

"I'm not. No use for you to pit your ideas against mine, you know. I deal with ideas made concrete—facts. And facts win."

"Not in the long run."

"They do. They shall."

"They don't. They won't."

"I'll fight you over that to my last drop of claret."

"Done. I take your challenge. Now go away, face your old facts, chill and all, and leave me to my duties—a new picnic route."

"I'm going away properly to-morrow,

at a glance anyone, short of a crowned head, who dared suggest his co-operation in an hotel expedition, especially such a thing as an evening tailing party which



but we'll have our first round in a week's time."

"First? We started to-night in the rest-room. And I won."

"You didn't."

The gentian eyes opened to their widest.

"B.B., you are a shocking liar."

II.

A WEEK ago B.B. would have withered

dragged you out after dinner. But when he found that the route planned by Miss Fantasy led to a spot about ten miles off which he thought might be useful to one of his enterprises, he suddenly elected to go. So he went off to find her, for it occurred to him that the expedition would afford an excellent opportunity for reopening his duel with her.

Her eyes dilated at the suggestion, then drooped sadly.

"I'm wanted badly here. The manageress is entertaining some of her friends. The manager is bossing this tailing party."

"I'll settle all that." He marched to

the bureau and promptly arranged for her escape.

"And now for a horse-sleigh, the best."

"I'll tie on behind, then. I'm going in a luge."

"You can't," he boomed, and went off to give orders. He returned crestfallen, seething.

"All the horse-sleighs are booked. It's outrageous that I—I, who made the place, should have to stand aside."

"You needn't. My luge is big enough for two," chirped Fantasy. "It's ever so much more sporting than a horse-sleigh. Only I've no fur rug or cushions. We must just pretend we have those. You get a pair of Chinese lanterns fastened to bamboos, please, while I change."

With marvellous submissiveness he departed, bought a lady's fur coat, two of the best lanterns, and a box of chocolates from the shops, while his man produced his master's fur wrap, a silk duvet, down cushions, and a glorious bearskin rug.

"Oh," gasped Fantasy, as she donned the fur coat, "how wonderful you are! Do you travel about with such things for your friends?"

"It's yours. It is just a 'fact.' Pleasing. I hope?"

"It's a nest of ideas—sables, Russia!"

"You can work 'em out as we go. Come along." He hustled her into the portico. "We'll tie on to the leading sleigh."

"No, no," she pleaded. "The last, please, because then we shall enjoy the other lanterns and lights ahead of us as we go looping round the curves of the road."

With whistles, calls and guitar-twanging, shouts, songs, laughter and tinkle of sleigh-bells, the *cortège* set forth along the sparkling avenue and through the little town, and took the high-road to Adelstein, the tiny hamlet dominated by a chalet-inn, where the company were to dance and regale before their return.

"Isn't this gorgeous?" trilled Fantasy. "Don't you feel, B.B., as if your light were the jewel in the tail of a fairy dragon?" She swung aloft her beautiful jade-coloured lantern. "So clever of you to choose this shade for me—the colour of elfin dreams. And yours—red-orange—such a contrast!"

"What does that stand for?" asked her escort rather surlily, for the swaying of the luge upset his digestion—at least, he thought so.

"Fairy gold," she suggested promptly,

"or hard cash, whichever you like. One stays with you, the other melts."

"The fairy oof?"

"No."

"Rubbish!"

"I'll prove it to you. Oh-h!" For at that moment the "dragon" took a bend of the route so swiftly that their rope—they were the last of a trio of towed luges—all but jerked them out. She extricated herself from his chest.

"Now, B.B.," she gasped merrily, "don't let us pull out our foils again for a bit. One gets so interrupted. Let's simply enjoy life. Look! There's a wood nymph's cold green hair, wreathed with ivy, flowing down over that little gorge. And there's an ice elf's spear. Lovely!"

"I only see some silly, old, big icicles with green stuff frozen into them," he snorted.

And in this fashion they wrangled, clutching the sides of the luge, for the pace of the *cortège* was rapid. Meanwhile he kept a look-out for a certain waterfall, a big one. It gleamed on them ahead, a frozen green-white pall, crowned by a cottage.

"There it is," he cried, "my last big fact! It's no good at the moment. But in the spring that water-power, with a new mill-house, will run half a dozen embroidery workshops."

"To me it is just a broad moon-path leading up to a little castle with a star to light it," she retorted.

A memorable expedition, that—how memorable the occupants of the thirteenth luge did not realise till later on. Big Business was actually amused. He felt ten years younger as he tossed off his muffler and coat and joined in a polonaise in the clean wooden parlour of the Adelstein inn, and helped to light the candles on the host's little Christmas-tree, or distributed the gifts which the ingenious manager had brought; or, again, sipped hot cherry wine and ate little ginger cakes shaped like bambini all swaddled in sugar icing. And through it all danced the personality of Miss Fantasy—audacious, irrepressible. "*Mon Dieu!*" said the French-Swiss manager, Clignot, to B.B. "Zat Fantessor girl is vat you call a public asset! I vas nervous at ze first ven I engaged her, but I vas right. I am always right." He slapped his shirt-front.

B.B. scowled. He flattered himself that he had "discovered" the real Miss Fan-

tessor. His eyes roamed the room; the sense of sole proprietorship rose in him. He would drop her a hint. To-morrow she should ask Clignot for another pound a week on the strength of being a public asset.

He found her presently outside, hatless and coatless, recovering breath after a laborious schottische with the host's son as partner. But just as he intervened, the sleighs drew up to the door for the return journey.

"A lovely evening," she sighed, snuggling down into the sable coat as they swung off.

"Not bad," he admitted.

"So much nicer than a modern hotel," she chirped wickedly. "Think of the old fiddler, the delightful bare room, the spirit of it all. Your old money-bags could never have created that atmosphere."

That hurt him. "I'm too sleepy to quarrel now," he said bluffly.

"All right. I score again. Give me your lantern. I'll see to both of them while you sulk and slumber, B.B."

He smiled in a superior way and surrendered the lantern. He was sick of holding it, and he wanted to think, get back into his old groove. It was wonderful how clearly his brain worked to-night, though she would persist in humming a wild, mad song:

"Faëry gold, faëry gold!
You shall endure when the earth is old,
And all the palaces are cold;
When all the toys are broken dust,
And every minted coin is rust . . ."

It was quite absurd, yet somehow it made a soothing background for his thoughts, his galloping calculations. The pace of the *cortège* helped him, too. The sleighs were racing, the luges flying behind them like beads on a witch's cord.

III.

HE never knew exactly when that frenzy of inspiration ceased. Nor could Miss Fantasy ever determine what time elapsed between her last bird-like trill on the word "faëry" and the moment when she found herself lying, not as she imagined at first, under the duvet in her attic bed, but on a slanting patch of snow in a little gorge. Very slowly she retraced things. There had been just one of those unexpected turns in the road, a chorus of excited laughter as the last sleigh, finding itself, too, left in the lurch, increased its speed at a mad bound—and then she was flying through the night.

It was intensely, beautifully silent.

This might be Heaven at last. But somehow she felt clogged, hobbled, uncomfortable. And you surely didn't arrive in Paradise in a slanting position, hobbled by the ankles? She tried to rise, found herself, with feet still caught, overbalancing, lay down again and kicked, holding on to a half-buried pine branch over her head. It was agony, but the slab of stone which held her toes gave, slithered, rolled. It was a second or two before she heard it drop with a faint thud. That meant a chasm, imminent, deep, just below her. How wonderful that must be—a perfect well of ancient rock history and romance! If only she could get B.B. to hold the jade lantern over the edge, she might climb down. But where was B.B.?

"Stars, waters, boundless spaces, where is he? Nothing really bad can happen to B.B. Not now. He isn't ready. He wouldn't understand you yet," she muttered bravely, feverishly, as she crawled forth along the curling edge of the chasm on her quest.

B.B. lay on his face a hundred yards away, so much curled up, so much a part of the boulder which had mercifully checked his descent into the "wonder well," that it took her ten minutes to find him, without light save that of the stars, for the lanterns had vanished with the luge, eiderdown, and rug. Her nimble fingers passed under his big head and tenderly investigated it. His neck was warm, not rigid. She could feel a pulse fluttering under the ear. Very carefully she managed to pull him over on to his back, then shovelled, with her hands, the snow under his lower limbs so that the blood should flow to the heart. Yes, that was beating. She burrowed into the fur-coat pocket, found his flask, and rubbed his wrists and forehead with brandy. It seemed ages before he stirred, gave a long sigh. Next moment he gripped her arm.

"I've no money on me," he said thickly, "so it's no good for you to search me, you devil! It will be well worth your while to keep me alive. 'Phone No. 5001 Waldorf; tell the porter to send a car and a doctor, and then you can cut. I'll give you five hundred dollars if you come to-morrow to——" His voice trailed off into silence, his grip relaxed.

Miss Fantasy bent to his ear. "It's all right, B.B. You're safe with me and the stars. All the gold is safe, too—the fairy gold. That's all we want out here."

He emitted a fluttering sigh of childish relief. "Show me," he murmured. "It must be that big lump that is hurting me so under my hip. Ah-h!" His voice rose to a shriek of pain as he tried to sit up.

She moistened his lips with brandy and held him still. When he spoke again, it was in a much weaker and more rational tone.

"Something has happened."

"Yes. A wonderful adventure." She told him lightly what she guessed. "Our rope broke; we were tossed off the road. I don't know how long ago. You have a watch?"

"Yes—electric torch, too—pocket."

The watch had stopped at 12.45.

"The idiots must be looking for us all this time. Can you find out? Take the torch."

"I'll try." She dragged her bruised body up along the gorge, only to meet the blackness of a pine wood, then the glimmer of the road amid all-pervading silence. On her way back, however, she found at least the jade lantern, crumpled, but with the candle still in its socket.

"The brutes!" he raved, as she reported failure. "I'll have 'em all run in for this. Heavy damages!"

"They will be nothing to the damage you'll do to yourself, B.B., if you twist and struggle. Your thigh may be broken; it is certainly strained."

"To die like a rat—out here?"

"You won't. You shan't. It's just a lovely rest and doze you're going to have till the light comes."

"There you go, heading me off with your fairy tales! Look here, Fan, there must be a chalet hereabouts. I'll make it well worth your while if you can find——"

"Silly Billy, B.B., I saw none. If I were to set about hunting for it, I might be gone for ages—so long that, when I got back to you, you would be no good at all. It isn't worth while to leave you, not for an Eldorado. Don't you worry. You're going to live. You've got to live, so that we can fight again. Someone will miss us, someone will find out. I'm going to tuck you up, then make a chalet, and keep a look-out."

"Make?"

"Yes. Now be still, like a good child." She pulled his fur coat well over him, added a coverlet of branches, then shovelled snow on the top. Next she turned her small, impertinent nose skywards to test

the source of the wind, if any. Ah, yes! What breeze there was came from the other side of their big boulder. Good! She broke fresh fir branches, planted them fanwise all round him, leaving a tiny gap as a doorway on the lee side, and swiftly roofed the whole with other branches. Then she relighted the lantern, hung it from a tree close by the little gap, and patrolled outside with bird-calls and songs. Echo tossed them back. Thrice she repeated this, reaching, the third time, the road. After that her battered ankle gave way, so she crawled back to him and slipped in alongside under the pine shelter.

"It's lovely and warm," he murmured in the queer, dreamy voice so new to her.

"Yes." She bit her lip to prevent her teeth from chattering with cold and pain. "It's a cosy little chalet I have found."

"The heater is on, too."

"Yes, of course." She pressed closer so that her body might fill the wind-gap.

"Can you hear the music? I seem to have lost it."

"There's heaps of it about," she assured him. She slipped into the open and hummed softly:

"O God of mountains, stars and boundless spaces!
... of freedom and of joyous hearts!"

"That's the bit I wanted. 'Joyous hearts,'" he muttered. "No worry, no fear, no hustle."

"Like the bees and flowers, you know," she trilled softly, close to him. "Busy bees and fantasy flowers."

"That's nice. Quite smart," he chuckled dreamily, and fell asleep like a lamb.

And soon she, too, slept. But it was with ear a-cock for the first sign of rescue, for it was she who heard the car containing the search-party halt just before dawn above the pine-wood, she who brought B.B. back to the "pavement life" with the great glad news of rescue.

* * * * *

"I'll build a little house just above the gorge there," said B.B. a week later, as he sat beside the sofa on to which Miss Fantasy, rather paler than usual, but full of sweet mischief, had been lifted that morning for the first time after a very close shave of pneumonia. "A little beautiful shrine of thanksgiving it shall be, to 'The Maker of Miracles.' And over the door we'll hang up our foils."

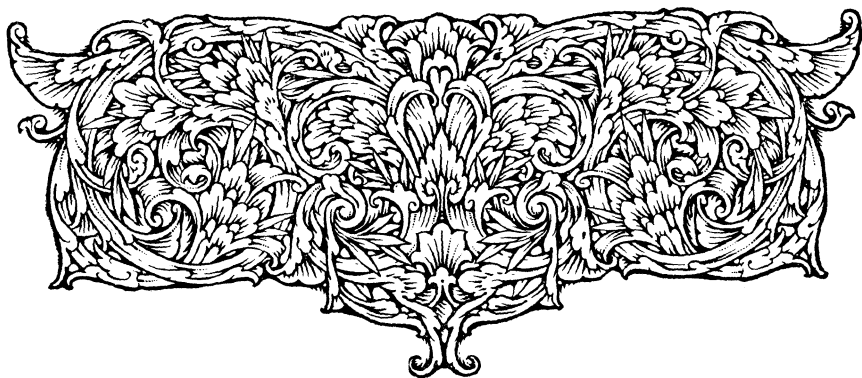
"Can I trust you, B.B., not to fight?"

"Mine will be a broken foil," he assured her, "and yours will be in such a beautiful sheath, all scrolled in a twining pattern so closely that I hope you'll never want to draw it."

"That's very pretty of you." Tears of happiness, weakness dimmed her eyes.

"And in the middle of our travels, little

girl, we'll go there and think. I've got a lot of real thinking to do, and I'll never get through it if you don't travel alongside. The busy bees can't do without the fantasy flowers, you know. That was your last lovely Idea before we left fairy land. It's so beautifully real that I want you to help me make it—a Fact."



APPLES AND ORANGES.

OH, apples and oranges are treasure for a king,
So heap them high upon your shelf and tune your heart to sing.
The hard frost rides the highways, aglint with many a star,
But apples and oranges are brighter, brighter far.

Oh, apples and oranges are things of royal kin,
So bid them gladly to your door and take their splendour in;
The north wind comes a-searching, but who need find him cold
When apples and oranges make crimson glow and gold?

Oh, apples and oranges are sweet with fairy wit,
So give them corners in your house and charm the heart of it;
And when the chimney's roaring and loud the tempest wails,
Then apples and oranges will tell their fairy tales.

Oh, apples and oranges are treasure for a king,
So look with gladness on your store and tune your heart to sing.
There's malice in the black frost and bitter strikes the blast,
But apples and oranges will hold your kingdom fast.

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.

A BUSINESS PROPOSITION

By PHILIPPA SOUTHCOMBE

ILLUSTRATED BY G. C. WILMSHURST

OLIVER MARRIOTT had for interest in life the retrieving of a fortune. No more, no less. Came Judy Adair, with the kind of eyes that said much—and all of it joyous as a May morning—and the kind of laugh that made the fortune a thing almost absurdly unnecessary and remote, for the space of one week. At the end of the week Oliver Marriott returned to the fortune with redoubled absorption, and the laugh went on echoing and re-echoing through those regions of finance where he pursued his fickle goddess with such grim determination.

Judy Adair had not been fickle at all. She had been as frank and direct as you please. She had told him, as man to man—but standing with her back to a tree, and the sun flickering through the leaves on her hair—that she thought him a fool. All money-grubbers were fools, and as to marrying one— She laughed.

The laugh sent Oliver Marriott's hands hard-clenched and a dogged bitterness into his usually rather wooden countenance. She did not understand, of course. But he did not tell her so. He did not say anything at all, and when the echo of her laughter left the May woods very quiet, she stood there looking at him curiously.

Perhaps she waited for his defence, for, for all her man-to-man directness, she was perverse enough, feminine enough, to expect it. But Oliver Marriott only told her, quite simply and plainly, just how matters stood.

It was a point of honour—a purpose that had been his ever since he had been old enough to realise the position. His great-grandfather had built up the fortunes of the house of Marriott, his grandfather had maintained it, and his father had, in the space of three years, flung it to the four winds of heaven.

Therefore upon Oliver Marriott the fourth devolved the responsibility of recovering it, or at least as much of it as would reclaim the old Marriott estate, and to that end he meant to devote all his energies.

"To money-grubbing," said Judy Adair.

He looked at her in a gravely contemplative way that held no hint of impatience or reproach. Judy Adair's eyes did not waver from his, although they were alight with laughter.

"There's all the world to live in," she said. "You could afford to take that post Forrester offered you in Tasmania. It is a good post—he said so—of exceptional official importance and responsibility."

"But not remunerative," said Oliver Marriott drily.

Judy Adair's third laugh held a ring of scorn.

"So you prefer an office."

"No, I don't prefer it. But it is a good thing financially, and will lead to a better."

She did not laugh any more. She said quite calmly: "In the one case I would marry you. In the other I would not."

And Oliver Marriott said as coolly, but not looking at the picture of her any more: "Then we know how we stand."

That was the actual end of that week of enchantment. There remained the echo of Judy Adair's laugh, and the purpose for which he had sacrificed the possibility of its ever being anything more than an echo.

Judy Adair packed two cabin trunks and accepted the invitation of a dull but hospitably-inclined cousin who had chartered a steam-yacht and made up a somewhat heterogeneous party for a ten months' cruise. By the time they were forty-eight hours out she had arrived at two definite conclusions: that the flame-coloured frock was a complete success, and that Captain Grandison—

chartered along with the steam-yacht—was as admirable as the craft he commanded.

And he, at least, was not a money-grubber. He possessed to the full that zest for care-free adventure wherein Oliver Marriott, it seemed, was so sadly deficient, and he was quite ready to share his enthusiasms with Judy Adair—an arrangement made all the more simple and inevitable by the fact that the rest of the party aboard the *Kestrel* were, as regards enthusiasms of any kind, a decidedly negligible quantity.

So Judy Adair found Peter Grandison excellent company, and in the blue waters of the Canaries that May morning of gold and green in a West Country wood seemed very far away indeed.

And then there came a day when the theoretical sharing of enthusiasms failed to satisfy Captain Peter Grandison.

Judy Adair listened, wide-eyed and demure, to his telling her so. She was not, it would appear, particularly surprised or particularly disturbed by the declaration—not, indeed, particularly anything. And she only smiled faintly when he unconsciously echoed the very words she had used to Oliver Marriott six months ago.

"There's all the world to live in, Judy! You—you're not so fearfully keen on living in England always, are you? Judy, you—you've said you're not."

"No, I don't think I am," she said slowly. She turned and looked at him, and for an instant—such odd tricks can memory play—she saw, instead of the eager, boyish face against a background of dazzling blue and white, the older face of Oliver Marriott, less eager, perhaps, less ardent, and set in a grim determination such as, at the moment, piqued her strangely. For she had told herself—when he had finally turned on his heel and left her to the stillness of the May woods—that it was despicable that such a power of determination should be evoked by money-grubbing. "He is using a force that ought to mean fighting and triumph—wasting it to buy tinsel," she had said aloud, and had been quite surprised at her own grandiloquence, then rather proud of it, and sorry that there should be only a squirrel and a wood-pigeon to hear it.

Into the memory of those quiet woods Grandison's voice jarred suddenly. It wasn't an unpleasant voice—indeed, until now Judy had apparently found it quite satisfactory—and the ring of youthful triumph it held was surely natural enough. Yet, for all that, it jarred.

Judy sat very still, her eyes fixed on the almost incredible sapphire of the sea. He leant a little nearer.

"When this cruise is over, you know, my job's at an end. The owner, who let her to your cousin for the cruise, doesn't want a skipper, because he runs the show himself. So I should have been at a loose end. Jobs like this one aren't easy to come by now-a-days, and if I hadn't by the greatest luck heard of this, I couldn't have—Judy!"

She turned towards him, perhaps impelled by the insistence of his voice, perhaps a little tired of her unequal struggle to banish that vision of English woods in May. She rested her hands on the arms of the long cane chair and listened with smiling attentiveness.

"It really *was* luck. A fellow I know helped me to get it—a good post in Tasmania. Rather an exceptional opening—responsibility and all that, and quite important officially."

"But not remunerative," said Judy Adair.

She was scarcely aware that she had spoken; her echo of Oliver Marriott's words was as unconscious as involuntary. Only, as she saw the startled amazement in Peter Grandison's countenance, realisation sent a flame of colour to her own.

"I—you see"—she gave a little breathless laugh—"I know all about it, don't I?"

He echoed the laugh, but with a ring of constraint.

"It sounds as though you did," he admitted ruefully. "But I don't know how—" He paused, looking at her curiously. Instinctively she was aware that he found her attitude amazing; perhaps she found it so herself. There was a little awkward silence. Then Grandison's voice:

"But I say, Judy, surely—"

"Yes?"

"Surely that is not such a tremendous consideration to you? I mean, you're not a bit the sort of girl who—hang it, Judy, you know you're not—"

She said, in an odd, dry little voice—

"I don't think I ever considered just what sort of girl I am."

Which was certainly true. For why should she, when other people were quite ready to do it for her? That they had done it rather agreeably was a fact which she had been far too carelessly in love with life in general to allow of any sense of vanity. Only Oliver Marriott, it seemed, had adopted a different line, and Oliver Marriott belonged



“In the one case I would marry you. In the other I would not.”



“‘Then we know how we stand.’”

to six months ago and fifteen hundred miles away.

"Funny thing was," said Peter Grandison slowly, "that the man who really put me in the way of the job had refused it himself. As a matter of fact, he was far more thoroughly qualified for it than I, and just the sort of fellow, too, for a job of that kind abroad. I found out afterwards that they'd done all they could to persuade him to accept it. And, instead, he chose to stick in a City office, not because he liked it—he loathed the life—but because he was making money like—like the dickens." He turned and looked her straight in the face, and his eyes were grave. "It was because of a girl, of course. But he has sacrificed his career."

Judy Adair was wondering why she didn't want to laugh at the absurd irony of it all. Something—a half-bitter, half-whimsical perversity—prompted her to refrain from enlightening him. She said gravely—

"He shouldn't have listened to the girl."

Peter Grandison gave an odd laugh.

"Of course he shouldn't, in theory, but in practice you'll find men do."

"Do they?" said Judy dully. There was no challenge or coquetry in her tone, but Grandison answered her almost fiercely—

"Yes, they do, and you know it! I dare say you think that you've only to say, and I, too, will throw up the job and find another, 'more remunerative,' to please you." He looked at her again, and that look was his undoing. "The devil of it is," he said, and his voice was rough and hard, "that you're right—I would."

In the dead silence that followed she could see his hands, lean and brown, hard-clenched on the cane chair arm, and the action, by a trick of memory, brought her the vision of Oliver Marriott in the West Country wood, six months ago.

She said at last, in a voice he had never heard her use before—

"Peter, I think you would, but I'm not going to ask you to."

He did not look at her any more.

"I know you're not," he said. And she knew that he meant: "I'd rather you would ask me anything than nothing at all."

"After all," she told him, "there was a man who—didn't."

He glanced at her then quickly. Judy looked straight ahead of her, and went on: "He was wise, you see—wiser than the man you knew."

"But I didn't know him personally," Peter Grandison corrected her—"only through a mutual friend."

"And he—the mutual friend—told you that Oliver Marriott had given up the post in Tasmania because of a girl?" said Judy slowly. She drew a long breath. "You see, I happen to know that he was quite wrong, because I was the girl, and Oliver Marriott was the man who didn't. And I'm going right back by the next steamer from Teneriffe to tell him—to tell him——" She paused. For it had suddenly occurred to her that she did not really know just what it was that she meant to tell Oliver Marriott, after all.

* * * * *

She had time, during the ensuing ten days, in which to find out. For, much to the dull but hospitable cousin's bewilderment and disapproval, she held to her decision, and while Peter Grandison headed the *Kestrel's* bows due southwards, Judy Adair, aboard the fruit-trader that had been the first vessel leaving for England, was finding an odd pleasure in the cold and wet of a drenching up-Channel sea-mist. Less than twelve hours later—for Judy, you see, never let the grass grow under her feet—she stood in that office wherein Oliver Marriott had presumably been "making money like the dickens," and listened blankly to the information that he had "gone down to his place in Somerset" for an indefinite period.

Judy Adair went down to Somerset, for she knew the village nearest to the old Marriott manor house well. On a grey November afternoon, with the woods drenched and fragrant after a night of rain, and a sky that held promise of more, she walked up the long drive of the old white house that had been indirectly the initial cause of everything.

Certainly, Judy reflected, Oliver Marriott did not spend his money in living in style. With the exception of the small south wing, all the windows were shuttered close, there were tall weeds in the drive, glimpses of broken fences, an unpruned shrubbery, and faded paint.

With a heart that was behaving rather remarkably, Judy dragged at a great iron bell, half hidden by swaying branches of a climbing rose torn down by the wind. The sound echoed clangingly, and met with no response. Judy Adair, smiling an odd, determined little smile, walked round to the paved courtyard across which were the

stables, and found another and humbler-looking portal with no bell at all. No result followed her knocking; no sound came from the row of loose-boxes across the yard. She had stood there ten minutes, and the rain had started in good will to ruin her most becoming hat, when there came the uneven click of a lame horse's hoofs, the sound of a man's voice, tired but encouraging.

Then Oliver Marriott, leading a bay, came through the archway.

They stared at one another incredulously, Oliver Marriott because of Judy's presence there at all, Judy because this shabby person and his shabby house were so utterly at variance with her conceptions of Oliver Marriott, successful financier, of Marriottscombe.

It was Oliver Marriott who broke the silence, and if Judy Adair found the manner of his greeting strangely disconcerting, he was none the wiser for that.

He said curtly—

"You wanted to see me? Perhaps you'll wait while I get this poor brute in out of the rain. He's had a gruelling to-day, and a pretty bad cropper into the bargain."

Judy Adair said, stroking the bay's reeking neck with quite steady fingers—

"You've been out with the hounds?"—and remembered the days when horsemanship had been one of the many bonds of their friendship.

He nodded briefly, and with scarcely a glance towards her, and not until the bay's needs were fulfilled, did he address her again. Then he said—

"Why did you come?"

Which was, of course, the moment for Judy Adair to explain all that which the past fortnight had surely given her time to find out. She paused, and then helplessly summed it all up in the inspiration—

"Because I wanted to see you."

Oliver Marriott thrust his hands into his pockets and looked at her squarely and inexorably.

"Why did you want to see me? I'm a failure. Since you're here you'll have to know. Perhaps it will amuse you—perhaps it will please you, since my 'money-grubbing' has not been a success."

"But"—in her amazement the bitterness of his tone only caused her a passing hurt—"but they—they said it was! They said you'd been making money like the— the dickens, and you've bought the place, just as you meant to. And I was glad."

"Were you?"

"Yes, I was. And I don't know what you mean about being a failure."

He shrugged.

"I don't know what else you could call it. I made the money all right at first—enough to buy Marriottscombe and old Rameses there"—he glanced in the direction of the bay, who lifted a beautiful, alert head in response to his name—"but then it went."

"Went?" she echoed him stupidly, staring at the grimness of his dark tired face.

"It has happened before, hasn't it? The greater part—I hadn't any control over that; it was just bad luck—the worst. And then what was left—well, I suppose I was mad. There was just the chance—the gambler's chance. I took it——"

He broke off.

"I see," said Judy quietly. She remembered then how it was that Oliver Marriott's father had flung his fortune away. Vividly she pictured the man before her, already conscious of crushing defeat, staking all that remained on that slender thread of chance—the thread that had snapped.

"Is there anything left?" she demanded.

He smiled wryly at her practicalness.

"There's the place—as you see it—and Rameses. The rest is negligible."

Judy Adair put her head on one side and looked at him, just as she had in the green-and-gold wood six months ago.

"Am I negligible?" she inquired.

"You?"

"We could farm," she told him. "The land's good, and I've a cousin who'd be delighted to invest some money in a reliable farm. He once said so. He's rich, and he'd make a—a sort of hobby of it."

"Investing money in a 'reliable farm' belonging to a gambler?"

"I shouldn't let you gamble any more," she said unflinchingly.

He said again—

"You!" And then: "Judy!"

"It's a business proposition," she told him steadily. "You can think it over and tell me in the morning. I'm staying at the village in rooms over the baker's shop."

He went on staring at her.

"I don't know how you found out I was here. I don't know how you heard anything about me."

"There's a lot you don't know," said Judy calmly. "I met the man who—who's taking up the post in Tasmania. He'd got hold of the wrong end of the story, and

before I'd put it right for him he'd made me see quite a lot that I hadn't before. So I thought I'd come and tell you. The man who didn't—that's you——"

"Didn't what?"

"Didn't let himself be persuaded by a girl. I—I really liked you for it. I suppose I liked you all the time."

"Judy!"

"So I thought I'd come and help you

with your money-grubbing, and marrying you seemed the easiest way."

"I oughtn't to let you"—he broke off suddenly, putting his hands on her shoulders and looking down at her with an odd fierceness—"as a business proposition, anyway——"

Judy smiled.

"There might," she admitted, "be some pleasure in it as well, you know."

THE HUNT.

ON the wind-swept wolds, where the grasses sigh
And quiver and bend as the wind blows by;
Where the grey March sky, cloud-ragged, is blue
In the gleaming rifts when the sun breaks through;
The road runs ever from down to dale,
And birds poise baffled before the gale.

Where fir-clumps dot on the downs' curved backs,
Where hayricks huddle in golden stacks,
Where folds, straw-thatched as yellow as corn,
Shelter grey sheep with their lambs new-born;
The road rides over the heaving land
To the green cross-roads where the sign-posts stand.

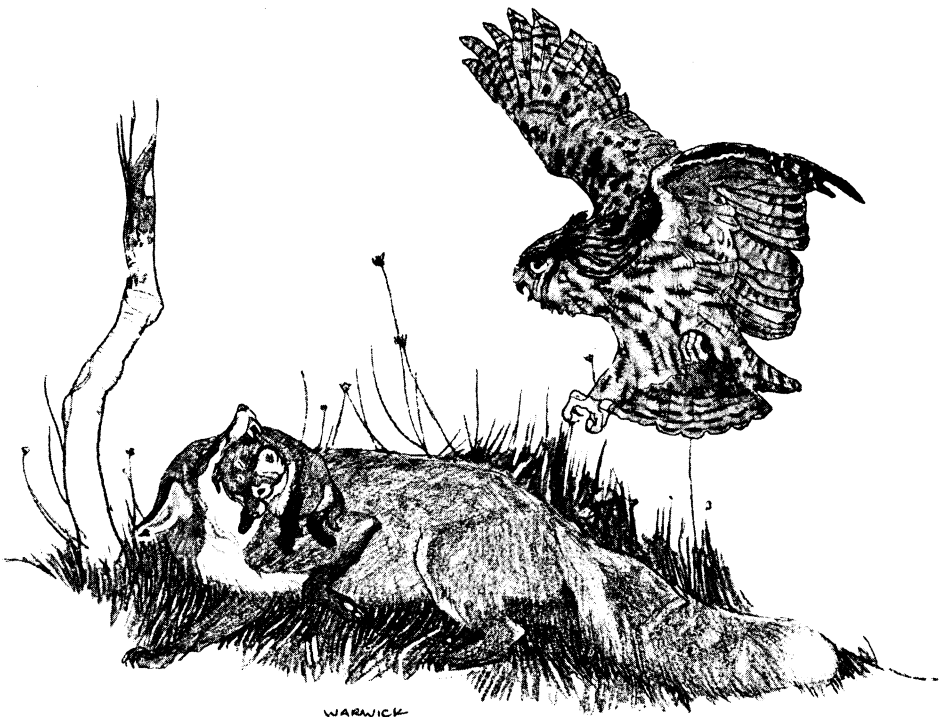
Where brown fields furrow in streaming lines,
Where green fields hummock, dark-crowned with pines,
Past slated cottage and dun-grey farm,
Whose watch-dog stirs at a ghost-alarm,
Barks his warning and drags his chain,
The road sweeps over the hill again.

I saw a hunt in the green down's fall,
From the field's steep slope, by the grey stone wall;
In the sun-washed dale, where the floods were out,
I heard in the wood-copse the beaters shout;
Out in the open the pink coats gay
Were glowing spots on the blown March day.

Some sighted the fox from the hill-top's rise,
And the downland echoed their hoots and cries;
The hounds broke out of the wood and spread
Through the splashing floods of the river-bed;
Crossed the ploughland and swarmed the hill,
With joy in the chase and desire to kill.

The riders followed, and one and all,
Hounds and huntsman, they leaped my wall;
Horses, chestnut and white and black,
Pink and grey riders, they followed the pack—
Streamed to the crest of the downs—were gone—
And I in the wind on the road trod on.

MARIAN ALLEN.



WARWICK
REYNOLDS

"A great horned owl swooped down almost close to her, and wondered why he did not wrest the tiny whelp from the vixen; but . . . he knew that, maul'd and maimed as she was, in the combat that would ensue, the vixen would not be lightly conquered."

WHITE-TIP'S HUNTING

By H. THOBURN-CLARKE

ILLUSTRATED BY WARWICK REYNOLDS

AS the wild folk count age, White-Tip was very old. Many winters had skirled their music over the bleak, fretted limestone of the Scar since the spring that had seen him deposited in the burrow his mother had wrested from a colony of rabbits and appropriated to her own needs. White-Tip's life had almost ended in tragedy before he was an hour old, for the farmers who dwelt around the Scar had united in one big, raiding fox shoot, and White-Tip's father had paid the price for numberless lambs and poultry that he had killed or helped to kill. So when White-Tip was but a few hours old, his mother had seen his father shot, and had run for her life all through one dreadful afternoon, her mother-heart torn by the knowledge that her babies lay

nestling under the roots of an ancient tree at the foot of the Scar. She had darted away like a vivid red streak through the ruddy brown of the last year's bracken, the hard, splintered stems and stalks of which cut her feet and lacerated her sides, over stone walls, through scrub oaks, until she came to where a scattered grove of larches had rooted into scanty earth that covered one part of the limestone and had grown tall and stately. She had not run scatheless, and one fore-paw hung limp—for a bullet had smashed the bone—and her shoulder ached from a narrow strip of skin and fur that had been carved out by another bullet. Utterly winded and dog-tired, she had crouched under a tangle of brier and bramble, and waited until the tracking dogs had

passed her by. Then very cautiously, limping painfully, she had crept out and looked all around her. Everything was very quiet—so still that she felt certain the foe had vanished, and she headed back towards her earth at the bottom of the Scar. Suddenly a blaze of fire darted from a pile of stones to her left, and another bullet furrowed a line through her ruddy coat, this time on her left hind leg. It was enough. The vixen turned—whirled would be a better word—on her own axis and darted like a flash up through the larches and away, the ache of her seared limbs and the fret of her smashed fore-paw forgotten in the mad terror of her flight. Up and up she went, until a fretted barrier of weather-worn limestone rocks barred further progress. A bolting rabbit showed her the way, and she found, not only shelter, but food in the warren of the rabbit colony. There she lay, licking her wounds and moaning softly with the pain of her paw, but all the time waiting anxiously for a chance of getting back to her babies in the earth under the century-old oak tree at the bottom of the Scar.

Night came at length, and hardly had the sun slipped out of sight and the westering rays faded, than she crept out and limped hurriedly over the rough stones. She had never wandered far afield. Food had always been found close at hand, and although her life had been spent under the Scar, hardly, as the crow flies, more than a quarter of a mile away, still the way was barred by the seven-hundred-foot cliff-face that dropped sheer down from where she crouched. The memory of that terror-stricken run dwelt heavily in her mind. Below her lay the land that she knew, around her a sweep of weathered limestone, with here and there groves of larches, and everything strange and unknown. The way home lay down through places haunted by deadly flames that sputtered from some hidden foes. Besides, her wounds ached so dreadfully. Now and again she bit savagely at her smashed paw and tried to still the pain.

Her babies lay below; she could almost hear their whines. There was no one but herself. She had seen a farmer, with gun tucked under his arm, swinging her mate by the tail. There was only herself. She leant over the face of the Scar, peering down into the gloomy darkness below, seeking a way down. The task was a dangerous one, but eventually she crept over the edge and climbed slowly down for about a

hundred feet; then somehow she tripped and missed her footing, and slid for a distance, until at last she crept out, dusty, buffeted by bramble and fallen rocks, on to the top of a long, sloping slide of weather-worn stones that had brittle off the cliff. The rest of the way seemed easy, and in an unwounded condition she could have done it without any trouble, but now, damaged and wounded as she was, the rest of the going was one long agony. Finally, just as she had almost reached the bottom, two rocks, disturbed by her movements, came rattling down, one of them pinning her injured paw to the ground. She yelped with the sudden jarring pain of the impact, then tried to drag the smashed paw away; but she had no power—it was held as in a vice.

With all the patience of the wild folk she waited, then, with a sudden snarl, she bent her head and bit savagely and sharply at the place where the bullet had smashed her fore-paw. The agony was terrific, but she bit still more deeply, and although she hardly knew how to bear the severing of the tortured nerves, she endured the pain, and in a few minutes she was free.

Ten minutes later she was snuggling down amid her whimpering whelps, who struggled blindly against the tired, panting body. Then very tenderly, and with many twitchings, she licked her wounds until she had numbed them slightly, and sank back and slept. Her dreams were haunted by the memory of the dread happenings of the afternoon, and just after midnight she rose, and, picking up White-Tip by the scruff of his neck, she sallied forth. She would leave the old hunting-ground and seek safety on the Scar. The security of the rabbits' burrow under the weathered terrace of limestone called insistently. With her maimed fore-paw she could not hope to scale the cliff, so that way was barred. Instead, she would have to trot limpingly along the road. Fortunately, it was quite deserted at this hour of the night, only the wild folk being abroad.

Patiently she trotted on, through the golden lacework of light falling through the tall hazel trees—for the moon was full and riding high overhead—between high stone walls from which the stoats and weasels peered out and chittered viciously. What was a vixen doing carrying her young one so far afield at that time of night? Why, too, was she limpingly moving on three legs? A great horned owl swooped down

almost close to her, and wondered why he did not wrest the tiny whelp from the vixen; but although he could see the agony of despair in the mother-eyes—the desperate fear that she would never be able to accomplish her purpose—still he knew that, mauled and maimed as she was, in the combat that would ensue, the vixen would not be lightly conquered. So he swooped up and down, industriously pretending to hunt mice and rats on the strip of rough grass and herbage close to the walls. But he was only waiting for the vixen to collapse by the roadside, and then he could take his time and snap up the tiny, blind creature that she carried.

Overhead the plovers wailed moaningly as a chill, white sea-fog swept up from the estuary. They were making their way down to the marshes. A poacher's dog dashed over the wall and darted off after a rabbit, but the vixen toiled on. Some instinct told her the way to travel, for she turned up the road that led up the fell, and continued on, her movements getting slower and slower, but still advancing. Then she reached the larch grove and, turning in, recognised one of the places where she had taken refuge during the chase of the previous afternoon. The way beyond was far worse than the road, for the rocks were sharp and the bracken hard and stiff. But still she went on. Sometimes, utterly out of breath, she sank down on the stones and laid the whimpering whelp beside her; but the swooping great horned owl came closer, and once more she took up her burden, and before long reached the burrow.

The startled rabbits dispersed at her approach and scattered. Something caught her, and, turning, she found that she was entangled in a rabbit net. She laid down her whelp and snapped the string meshes with savage bites until there was a hole large enough through which she could creep. Then, picking up the whelp again, she crept forward into the heart of the warren. There seemed to be no rabbits; perhaps her visit during the afternoon had dispersed them, and they had been afraid to return. Instead, she caught a glimpse of a long, lithe creature curled up in the nest that she intended occupying. Its perfect whiteness startled her, but instinct warned her that the creature, in spite of its small size, was dangerous.

She had done so much, had borne so much pain, that she was utterly careless of consequences, and yet there was her whelp. She stood looking at the sleeping intruder with

sullen eyes, her whelp dangling from her foam-flecked jaws. Then she moved very stealthily around until she was behind the sleeping ferret, and, dropping her whelp nimbly between her legs, she made a sudden pounce. Her shortened fore-paw destroyed her balance, but, all the same, her jaws snapped viciously across the ferret's back. There was a faint crack, and the ferret tried to spring, but his back legs dragged limply behind him, and only his red, savage eyes glared defiance at the vixen. Another stroke of the long red jaws, and the ferret lay dead, while outside the warren two poachers complained that Jim would not come out, and something had ruined one of their best rabbit nets.

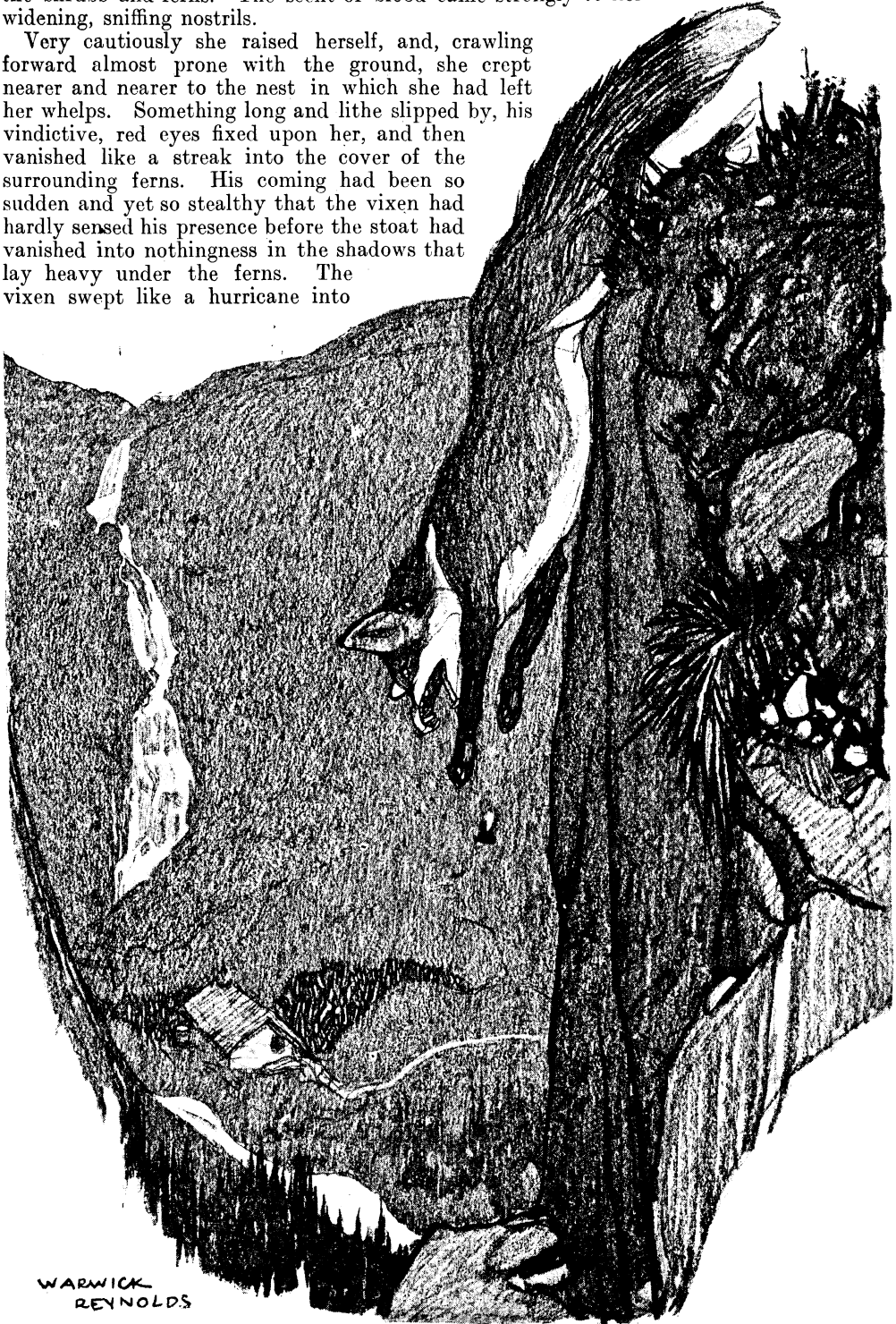
Secure in the knowledge that nothing could dig her out of her retreat, the vixen tossed the limp form of the ferret savagely aside, and then, picking up her whelp, she moved him to the centre of the nest and snuggled down. Then she slept.

The two poachers packed up their nets, complaining still more bitterly that Jim must have killed a rabbit and was sleeping it off. There would be little hope of ever getting him again. Little they guessed that Jim, the ferret, was already stiffening in death in the warren, while his executioner slept the sleep of the utterly weary not a foot from where his white, lithe body lay. Jim was past caring for anything now. The man-scent still lingered when the vixen awoke. Already in the east the steel-blue sky was lightening, while, now the moon had sunk, the stars shone out with vivid brilliance. It was close on dawn, and she had two more whelps to carry into safety before the world got busy with its daylight affairs.

Every bone ached, and she was utterly weary, but the insistent mother-love called her. She nosed around the little whelp, who, well-fed and comfortable, was sleeping soundly. Next she examined the warren for any possible foes, and then, stepping very softly into the grey mist of early dawning, sniffed the air with questioning nose. The man-scent was still there, but she could see nothing of the poachers, and, sniffing up and down, she discovered that the scent was already stale and growing old. Very cautiously she slunk to the edge of the Scar, and, having learnt from experience, she found an easier way down, crawling from ledge to ledge until at last she reached the bottom, and loped lopsidedly off to her earth. Suddenly she stiffened and slowly sank to the ground, melting into nothingness among

the shrubs and ferns. The scent of blood came strongly to her widening, sniffing nostrils.

Very cautiously she raised herself, and, crawling forward almost prone with the ground, she crept nearer and nearer to the nest in which she had left her whelps. Something long and lithe slipped by, his vindictive, red eyes fixed upon her, and then vanished like a streak into the cover of the surrounding ferns. His coming had been so sudden and yet so stealthy that the vixen had hardly sensed his presence before the stoat had vanished into nothingness in the shadows that lay heavy under the ferns. The vixen swept like a hurricane into



WARWICK
REYNOLDS

"Just as the vixen dropped over on to the ledge below."



"The dogs . . . cut rapidly across the rocky surface, and reached the edge of the cliff."

the earth, and then stopped, suddenly frozen into immobility at the sight of her few-hour-old whelps lying mangled and dead, their tiny throats torn out by the marauder that had drained their life-blood. For a few minutes she stood frozen into stillness, gazing down at the tiny lifeless forms; then, bending down, she buried them amid the wreck of her earth, patiently and painfully scraping forward the earth with her one sound paw, as she supported herself against the root of the tree that sheltered her earth. Then, with a wild, yelping cry, she turned and commenced her long journey back to the rabbit warren on the Scar.

The dawn was coming up as she topped the edge of the fell, and the wild life was slipping off to their lairs. Other foxes were on the move, but they went about their business, and did not stop to inquire into the doings of a strange fox. That could come later. The weasels and stoats still chattered angrily as she passed, but, seeing the savage curl of her upper lip over the white fangs that gleamed even in the starlight of dawn, they slipped further back into the walls, so as to be quite safe. The barn owls fluttered by like great moths, still hunting eagerly for mice and young rats to satisfy the hunger of their nesting mates.

The vixen dragged her way wearily along, haunted with the dread memory of the fate that had overtaken the young in the earth under the old oak tree, and dreading she knew not what might happen to the whelp she had left in the rabbit warren under the limestone barrier. The sun was showing over the distant mountain-tops and bathing Helm in a glory of golden light when she slipped into the hole under the limestone and found the whelp she had left there still sleeping happily. Then, in a frenzy of awful rage, she picked up the body of Jim, the ferret, and, because he resembled on a larger scale the form of the stoat that had killed her young, she dragged the body outside and some distance away from her nest, and savagely rent it into numberless bits. Not till it had been strewn to the four winds did she rest satisfied. Then, and only then, did she creep back to where her whelp lay sleeping. Lying down beside him, she slept, for she was utterly weary.

The vixen slept on while the day deepened to night and then day, and even when night came again she did not feel able to venture out and secure some food. Even at last when, half starved and miserably thin, she came out from the burrow, she was almost afraid to move more than a few yards from the opening under the limestone. The memory of Jim, the ferret, haunted her, and she was afraid that another of his kind might be sent down the hole. She did not know that the poachers had left that warren severely alone, or she might have hunted more leisurely.

As it was, she soon learnt that the calling of the hens in the evening meant the homecoming of the straying poultry, and a run of a few hundred yards and a fat fine hen to be had simply for the snapping up. With intense cunning she would slip out just at sundown and, running down to the road, dart across into a plantation and then up on the top of a high, ivy-covered wall. Here among the ivy she lay concealed; then, as the hens passed, she sprang down upon them, and then regained her lair by climbing swiftly up the trunk of a tree that leant, half dead and ivy-covered, against the wall. There in her lair amid the ivy she ate her meal, and hurried back to the burrow under the limestone; but always she scattered the feathers to windward behind the wall, and the breeze wafted them far and near. The doings of the three-legged

fox became a byword on the fell farms, but none suspected her hiding-place, and no one ever found it. You see, the wall was so very high facing the farmhouse that everyone forgot it was quite low on the other side, just where a mound of earth had been thrown against it.

When White-Tip grew old enough to have red food, the vixen was faced with a difficulty. She must catch the hens when they were going in to be fed, and the hue and cry after the missing hen was immediate; and although it was safe enough among the ivy, it was another matter to carry it off to the top of the Scar. Then she hid the hen amid the ivy, and returned for it later when the hue and cry was over; but, unfortunately for her going, the farmer's wife caught sight of a red streak crossing the high-road one evening just after sundown, and at once dropped to the conclusion that the three-legged fox was the one that robbed her of the hens. The dogs were unloosed, and the farmer and his men snatched up their guns and were soon on the trail of the vixen.

She heard the dogs giving tongue, and knew with swift intuition what had happened. Away like a streak she slanted, knowing only too well that White-Tip would be waiting outside the burrow eager for her return. Never since that awful afternoon in the spring had she raced so hard. Up, up she went, topping the rise amid the larch trees, then over the stone walls, until she came in sight of the burrow. There was White-Tip, sitting waiting. She dashed forward and pushed him roughly into the hole, and then circled rapidly around and around the limestone barrier that covered the burrow. White-Tip, thoroughly frightened, crept hurriedly away into the darkest recess of the warren, while his mother raced around and around in ever-widening circles. Then, when the farmer's dogs appeared in sight, she darted off to the edge of the Scar. The dogs did not stop to follow the scent, but, catching sight of the red streak making for the top of the Scar, cut rapidly across the rocky surface, and reached the edge of the cliff just as the vixen dropped over on to the ledge below.

The dogs stood in a row, barking furiously, making wild endeavours to get down to where the fox sat. If there had been anyone to see, they would have said that she smiled widely. They might even have said that she laughed; but the dogs only barked the more furiously. Yet when the farmer and

his men came, there was nothing to be seen. The fox had vanished like a streak, and the furious, barking dogs could not tell anyone that the vixen was lying *perdu* in a hollow opening out of the ledge. One of the farm hands declared that he saw the fox and fired, asserting that he had killed it; but as the hens still vanished, no one believed him. The vixen waited for half an hour, then she slipped off back to the ivy-covered wall, retrieved the dead hen that was lying concealed among the greenery, and brought it back to the hungry, frightened little White-Tip, still lying huddled in the furthest corner of the burrow.

But that was all ancient history now, and although White-Tip still used the ivy-covered wall as a vantage point when he wanted a hen, it is doubtful whether he remembered very much of his mother's exploits. Yet in the stormy life they had led—for on the Scar they were the veriest Ishmaels for many a long day—they had invaded a domain that belonged by right of birth to the foxes born on the top of the Scar, and as White-Tip grew older, he had to fight his way upwards, until, what with his mother's teaching and his own natural cunning, he had become the leader among the foxes that lived on the Scar.

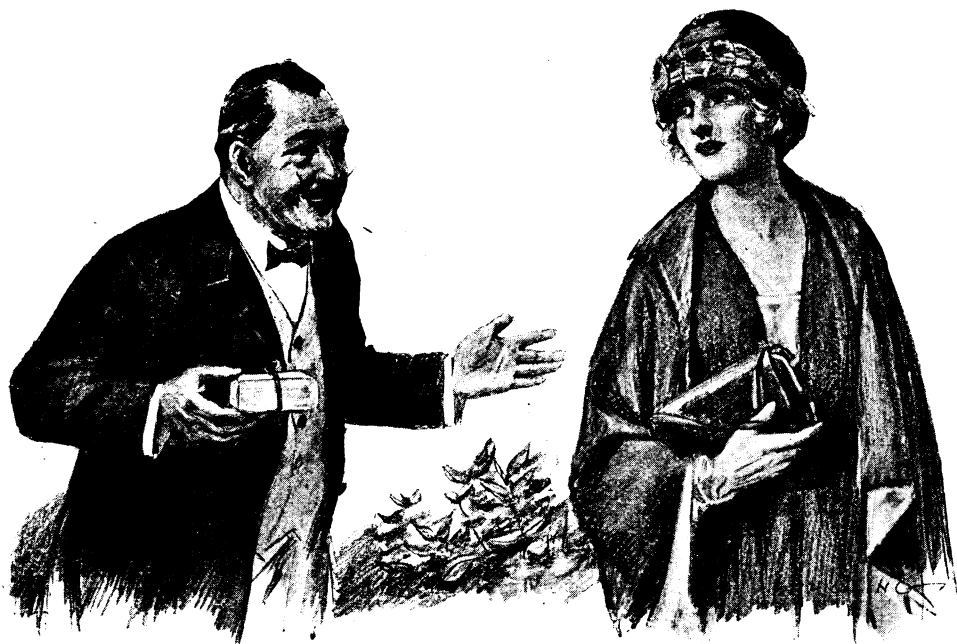
The vixen had tired of it all, and had gone home to her kin and another mate, and had died of old age, while White-Tip had mated and grown old in his kingship of the Scar. He sat and gazed over the farm from his vantage point on the top of the ivy-covered wall. He was watching for the letting out of the young geese, for away in the burrow an impatient mate and four hungry whelps waited for their breakfast. The sun was hardly above the horizon, and it was mid-summer, but the farm-folk were early astir. He had a great contempt for them all, but when he saw the collecting of the dogs, and strange men-folk appeared with weapons over their shoulders, he knew that the forces were being marshalled against him. He gazed with eager eyes at the company, his upper lip lifted in a knowing smile. A big fat gosling came waddling by, and, in spite of the hissing of its mother, he swept like a warm, red flash straight down upon the luckless gosling, and had returned to the shelter of the ivy almost before the goose had had time to protest. Then, like another streak of warm colour, he had darted away up the Scar, and was back at the burrow

before anyone had really seen what had happened.

But he was not taking any risks that the scent would lie around his home, for he circled widely, just as his mother had done, only he, with a bolder daring, darted back to the road and waited. But every now and then, during that run to the road, he had rolled and made false trails leading away in all directions. It was all so sudden and swift that even the brooding plovers had hardly time to gather, with wailing cries, before he was off and out of their sight.

Then the dogs saw him, and he led them a fine chase, keeping well out of range of the farmers' guns back to the edge of the Scar. But, as he headed down towards it, he saw a sparrow-hawk come whirling up in violent haste. Something or someone had disturbed her hunting, so White-Tip wheeled suddenly and shot out down towards the larch grove. He had just gained the road, when a market cart full of sacks of wheat came by, and the carter yelled forth the news. Again White-Tip doubled back, only to see another foe waiting for him. He was cornered. The grinning carter drew rein and waited, but White-Tip had darted apparently behind a bramble bush that sprawled beside the road close to the waiting cart. The dogs yapped around, the guns blazed into the bush, but although the bramble was thoroughly examined, no White-Tip was to be found. The carter started up his horses, grinning advice to the astonished farmers, and then slowly drove off along the road.

He would have been equally astonished if he had looked into the corner between the side of the cart and the wheat sacks. For White-Tip lay crouching there. But the carter never saw, nor did he see the fox spring out and vanish like a streak when the woods below the fell were reached. That night White-Tip grinned knowingly to his mate as he looked down upon a row of goslings and one big white goose that lay in their larder. He had caught them eating the wheat that had spilled from the cart when the carter stopped to watch the killing of White-Tip. Was it cunning or simply an accident that made the fox bury his teeth so deeply into the under-side of the sacks that the wheat dropped out on to the road? Who knows? But, at any rate, White-Tip had returned and killed all the goslings and the mother-goose when they stopped to feed on the fallen wheat.



“ ‘Woman is the rarest of created beings, but she has her limitations—she cannot choose a cigar.’ ”

THE MAYONNAISE CONSPIRACY

By A. A. THOMSON

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

HILDA was born in Yorkshire, where the parkin and the puddings come from. Hilda's aunt kept a boarding-house at Scarlington-on-Sea, which, as the poster-goaded public is well aware, claims the proud title of “Empress of the East Coast,” and in this select establishment (every convenience; three mins. from Prom.) Hilda “helped.” I like that word “helped.” It covers such a multitude of cooking and dusting and sweeping and tidying and stair-climbing that it might well be described as a charitable word. Scarlington (again see posters or write for booklet) was a spot where rank and fashion lightly sported for three months of the year, and where Society (capital S. please) bathed and golfed with characteristic abandon; but

this whirl of gaiety was not for Hilda. What is one person's meat is another's prussic acid, and the Scarlington season, which was a period of delight and relaxation for the rest of the world, was a time of sore tribulation for Hilda. Not that she minded the work itself—when you are twenty and pretty healthy, you can stand any amount of work. It was the sheer joylessness of continued ministrations to other people's pleasures that at times rather overpowered her.

If you have never “helped” in a seaside boarding-house (and, of course, I sincerely hope you haven't), you can hardly conceive in what terms the “help” regards visitors, those tyrannous, pleasure-sated beings from the outside world. Visitors are not so many

human creatures ; they are merely so many jugs of hot water, so many breakfasts (and eggs at fourpence-ha'penny), or so many beds to be made, and so many pairs of dirty shoes to be brushed. It was seldom that any visitor ever broke through the shell of this tyrannous anonymity and became really human, but the very rarity of such an event made it all the more momentous. There was, for instance, the extraordinary case of George, who came from London and wore gold-rimmed glasses. Londoners (as all good North Country folk know) are a vastly overrated set of people, but there was something prepossessing about George. He was neat and quiet, and had a way of prefacing his requests with "Would you mind?" that was, to say the least of it, pleasantly unusual.

It was one grilling hot August evening when Hilda brought supper into his little top-sitting-room (three guineas with attendance) that George made a remark which had never been addressed to her before.

"By Jove," said George, taking the heavy tray out of her hands, "you're looking absolutely done up!"

"No, I'm not," retorted Hilda defiantly, and collapsed on the horsehair sofa.

When she opened her eyes, this strange young man was alternately making hypnotic passes with a pocket-flask and patting her hands. (I wonder what doctor first prescribed hand-patting as a universal remedy for fainting. He must have been a wonderfully brilliant man.)

"I've been a perfect silly," murmured Hilda, struggling to rise.

"Sit still," said George authoritatively. "Of course you've been a perfect silly, working yourself to death at this rate, and dashing up and down these beastly stairs all day long."

"Now you're being silly," replied Hilda impatiently. "I don't do it for the fun of the thing. I've got to work, haven't I?"

"What you want is a jolly good rest," repeated George in a stern voice.

"I wish you wouldn't be so stupid. If I run away, who's going to help Auntie for the rest of the season?"

"Can't she take a maid? Or two maids? You oughtn't to be doing work of this kind."

"I tell you I've got to earn my living. This is the only home I've got, and there's no other way of—"

"Yes, there is one way."

"How?"

"Will you marry me?" demanded George, flourishing the brandy flask.

"I beg your pardon!"

"Will you marry me?" shouted George. There was a glint behind his spectacles. Assuredly he was one of those iron-willed heroes of whom Hilda had read in her rare spare moments.

"Whe-en?" asked Hilda faintly. After all, boarding-house "helps" do not receive thrillingly romantic proposals every day.

"As soon as the banns have been called, and not a second later," said the impetuous George.

And so George and Hilda were married, and entered on the first stage of their happy-ever-after journey at the jolliest little house in Palmer's Green.

On the first anniversary of the wedding Hilda's husband remarked: "Remember what day it is to-day, old girl?"

Hilda snuggled unashamedly against his shoulder, knowing full well what day it was. For the past year she had lived a life of tranquil happiness. Her little house went on wheels. George sallied forth into the City every morning, and returned every evening in time for a nice homely supper. Hilda had often wondered whether George (a born Londoner and a man of obviously superior tastes) would be contented with the plain Yorkshire cocking which comprised her entire culinary repertoire, but, at any rate, he never grumbled. It might have appeared to the unprejudiced (to you or me, for instance) that George was quite an ordinary young husband, in no wise different from any one of the tens of thousands of other young husbands who catch the eight-fifteen to the City every morning, but to Hilda he was a marvellous being, straight from Olympus, or, better still, straight from one of those really comforting novels. He didn't earn an enormous salary, of course, but he gave her as much as he possibly could. Some weeks she was even able to save a little out of the housekeeping money.

"Yes, darling," replied Hilda, between snuggles, "I remember."

"Good," said George. "Now, what do you say to a little celebration? How about dinner?"

"Dinner?"

"Yes, dinner in Town and a theatre afterwards."

Hilda signified her approval in the usual manner.

They do you pretty well at Troxime's--at least, George said they did you pretty well, and Hilda was quite prepared to take his word for it. After all, she had been only

a year in London, and this was her first experience of a restaurant where they "did you" really gorgeously. She opened her eyes wide at the bewildering kaleidoscope of Troxime's *salon*. The softly-shaded lights, the flowers, the gleaming cutlery, the immaculate diners, and the silent, swift-footed waiters—the whole scene, with its colour and animation, made her feel as if she were in fairyland. The mosaic-like array of *hors d'œuvre* and the soup arriving in its silvery basins completely fascinated her. Then came the *pièce de résistance*—lobster mayonnaise. Why have our poets, who make such a fuss about things like nightingales and sunsets, never hymned the chaste beauties of lobster mayonnaise? A thing of beauty is a joy for ever. Very well, then. There it lay, an archipelago of radiant islets, set in a golden sea. To Hilda it seemed a dream of delight.

"Dinner all right?" asked George.

Hilda gave an appreciative coo. Then, with devastating suddenness, a cloud descended on her horizon and her conscience assailed her furiously. Here was George, the best husband in the world, who had been a Londoner all his life, and had probably been accustomed to dinners of this kind every day of his bachelor existence, and here was she, a stupid, ignorant provincial, who for a whole year had fed him on the plainest of plain fare. Roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, Yorkshire pudding and roast beef! She positively blushed to think of the number of times during the last twelve months she had inflicted this stodgily plebeian dish upon him.

"Not enjoying it?" asked George. "Have some chicken."

Chicken? Hilda felt guiltier than ever; and when the *coupe Jacques* followed the chicken, she saw her self as an absolute criminal, a selfish, thoughtless, ungrateful, absolutely unsatisfactory wife. Like a gallant knight, he had rescued her from her Scarlington dungeon, and what had she given him in return? Yorkshire pudding! The meal turned from the most delightful to the most miserable she had ever tasted, and when they left Troxime's and walked across the road to witness a very jolly musical comedy (dress-circle, too; none of your pit queues on a wedding anniversary), she sat through the performance without a smile. It might have been an Ibsen drama for all the amusement it afforded her.

Cut of the accumulated unhappiness of the

next three days Hilda's great project slowly formed itself. In six weeks from then it would be George's birthday, and she vowed that on that day she would make George a lobster mayonnaise or perish in the attempt. Following this stern resolve, she began to wear the air of a conspirator. Each morning an excuse was made to send Susan, the "daily," home, and secret experiments were conducted in the small kitchen. Books were consulted—fat, red books, full of such light-heartedly off-hand suggestions as: "Beat up one dozen fresh eggs . . ." or "Take one pint sherry . . ." There was an attitude of aristocratic generosity about these cookery books that made Hilda almost tremble. Still, she persevered with these daily experiments, and when the dishes were made, she forced herself to eat them, pretty much in the same way as Fluellyn forced Pistol to eat the leek. She ate them secretly, almost furtively, and, being a singularly honest young woman, she had to admit that they were very, very bad. Day after day she followed the track of that elusive mayonnaise as though it were a will-o-the-wisp, but at the end of two long weeks it was as far off as ever. All her high hopes came slowly tumbling down. But the darkest hour (if we may again refer to those cheerful fellows, the poets) comes ever before the dawn, and it was just when Hilda's prospects seemed at their gloomiest that the wonderful advertisement swam into her ken. It appeared in the local paper which came in every Saturday, and Hilda found it nestling coily between a cinema programme and the announcement of a furniture sale. It began with a trite but pithy categorical statement:

DAINTY DISHES ARE DELICIOUS.

Didn't Hilda know that only too well? She read on eagerly. "Has your cooking," the paragraph demanded, "that *souçon* of refinement, that artistic *je ne sais quoi* which makes all the difference? If not, we will teach you to acquire it. For all particulars apply Ecole de Cuisine Cordon Bleu."

Marvellous to relate, the address that followed was not in Paris or even the West End of London. It was in Maypole Terrace, only two streets away. Hilda seized upon the announcement as if it had been a life-buoy. The very moment George had hurried off to his morning train, she would go round and demand "all particulars" from 64, Maypole Terrace.

A trim maid admitted her into a

charmingly furnished room. Would Madame take a seat? M. Surfin, the principal of the Blue Ribbon School of Cookery, would be enchanted to interview her in one moment.

had entered, and Hilda turned to face a dignified and portly personage. M. Surfin's shining hair was brushed sleekly back, his moustache and imperial were waxed to



"Look here, Hilda," he said, "where were you at five o'clock this afternoon?"

On the wall hung a magnificent show-case full of gold and silver medals, trophies, it appeared, of the prowess of one Gaston Surfin, chef extraordinary to—

"Ah, madame!" The great man himself

stiletto points, and his tight frock-coat fitted him like a glove. It is impossible to imagine a figure more suggestive of a courtly French nobleman of the old school.

His charming old-world manner gave

Hilda confidence. Haltingly at first and then more fluently she poured out her story. She had read his advertisement. It was that *soupçon*; that *je ne sais quoi*, that lay at the root of the trouble. Could he help?

"But certainly, madame," replied M. Surfin, with a magnificent gesture. "I understand perfectly. You have come, as you English say, to the right box. You will take my full course of instruction, and in six months I will guarantee your cookery to be superb."

"I'm afraid," sighed Hilda, "that that would be no use. I have only a month—twenty-seven days at the very most."

"And what of that?" demanded the Frenchman, waving his arms. "Madame will undergo my intensive course, and in one month I will render her cuisine perfect. I do not boast, but I am the only man in the world who could do it. Vainglory, I repeat, is abhorrent to my soul, but I, who was for twenty-four years chef at Ritzano's, may be supposed to know a little—*un tout petit peu*—about cooking. When would Madame care to begin?"

Only one reply was possible. M. Surfin had indeed appeared to her as an angel of light. She would join the school at once. The fees, which were not exorbitant, could be screwed out of the housekeeping money. I told you she had saved a little.

Immediately, then, Hilda started out on her second period of conspiracy, a period even more fraught with dark secrecy than the first. Most of the lessons could be taken in the afternoon, but there were others which required absence from home on odd evenings, an absence which had to be accounted for. This necessitated a fib—a whole series of fibs—and fibbing was an art in which Hilda had never excelled. The mere fact of deceiving George, even though the deception was so much for his own good, weighed upon her like a millstone; indeed, this innocent disloyalty so preyed upon her mind that if George had been a suspicious person (which he eminently was not), he might easily have suspected her of harbouring some dreadful secret. Slowly the weeks wore on. Hilda attended her classes regularly and continued her dark experiments at home. Was she improving? The kindly M. Surfin assured her that she was. As the fatal natal day approached, her agitation increased. Would the meal be a success? Would George really understand the enormous effort she had made for his sake?

Well in advance a menu of the great feast had been prepared under M. Surfin's direction. What would the good husband of Madame like best? M. Surfin would venture to suggest *hors d'œuvre various*; for soup, a cream of celery (as in Lesson Three); then the all-important lobster mayonnaise (Hilda, of course, absolutely insisted on that); then *blanquettes* of veal, followed by *petits fours*, and lastly coffee, and—did Madame smoke? No? Very well, then, a cigar for Monsieur.

* * * * *

On the afternoon of the all-important day a serious thing happened. The *hors d'œuvre* went wrong. Hilda suddenly discovered that the chopped carrots and peas of the Russian salad had—the phrase is hers, not mine—gone all to a mush. This was a setback, though not an actual disaster, for the other more important items of the menu were going very well. She would slip across and consult M. Surfin about the replacement of the ruined first course. He would be sure to think of something.

"Courage, madame," said he, when she anxiously questioned him. "No great harm is done. You shall give Monsieur grapefruit instead. You can obtain it at the fruiterer's as you return home. The preparation is absurdly simple. . . ." Then he waxed professionally technical for a few minutes.

Gratefully thanking him, Hilda set off for home, *via* the fruiterer's; but before she had reached M. Surfin's garden gate she heard an excited cry behind her. The principal of the Blue Ribbon School of Cookery was dashing down the garden path in her wake.

"One moment, madame!" he called, his arms flapping like windmill sails. "You have forgotten the cigar!"

"But I was going to buy one or two at the tobacconist's. It's next door to the fruiterer's, you know."

"*Mon Dieu!* Heaven forbid that Madame should do that. It would ruin all. Woman is the rarest of created beings, but she has her limitations—she cannot choose a cigar." He proffered her a small package. "I beg you will accept this. It will give the crowning glory to the feast. *Au revoir*, madame, and good chance! A fellow-artist wishes you a magnificent triumph this evening. Good success!" And, pressing the package into her hands, he swept a low bow and trotted back into the house.

Hilda bought her grape-fruit and hurried home. The dining-room clock was striking five as she entered. Her husband was sitting in the leather armchair by the fireplace. Hilda started violently.

"George," she exclaimed in agitated tones, "what made you come home so early?" Her look and her manner were extraordinarily guilty.

George eyed her keenly. "Can't a man come home an hour earlier on his birthday?" he asked.

"Of course," said Hilda, with a sigh of relief. "Read your evening paper, darling; I'm going to be most frightfully busy till dinner-time. Can you amuse yourself till then?"

"I dare say," answered George shortly. This was not said in his usual cheerful tone, but at the moment Hilda had no time to inquire into the matter. The task of her life was before her. The supreme finishing touch had to be put to her labours. For two hours she wrestled with stove and saucepans in the crowning battle of her long campaign, but as seven o'clock struck, she felt that the final victory was with her. She ran upstairs, threw off her overalls and slipped on the little blue satin frock that George had always particularly liked. Susan had already laid the table. Everything was in readiness. At last the moment arrived when George and Hilda sat down and Susan brought in the grape-fruit. Hilda watched her husband anxiously. He wore a dull and worried look, and ate abstractedly without speaking a word. The soup which followed was of a superb flavour, but George approached it with entire lack of enthusiasm. From his stolid silence it might have been supposed that he was negotiating a plateful of prison skilly. As Susan marched in with the long-awaited lobster mayonnaise, Hilda shook with suppressed excitement. This was the supreme moment. Would the mayonnaise stand by her? Her hand trembled as she served the first helping, but the dish certainly looked magnificent. George took the plate mechanically.

"Is anything worrying you, dear?" asked Hilda, almost in tears with anxiety.

"Yes," said George, fiddling with his fork.

"Is it something at the office?"

"No, it's not at the office." The words were almost sullen. What in the world could be the matter with him? There was a minute's dragging silence, then George suddenly pushed away his plate.

"Look here, Hilda," he said, "where were you at five o'clock this afternoon?"

It was a terrible blow. Was everything to be spoiled at the last moment? This was not the time for confession. She wanted—quite passionately she wanted him to believe that this wonderful dinner was the result of her own single-handed effort. How could she admit just then that she had solicited outside help? She fibbed rashly. "I was calling on Mrs. Bigby," she faltered.

George rose from the table. "Hilda, old girl," he said in a hoarse voice, "don't tell me what isn't true. I know you weren't at the Bigbys'. I know where you were, because I saw you."

Hilda gave a little gasp of astonishment and terror.

"You know I came home an hour earlier than usual," he went on accusingly, "and as I passed the end of Maypole Terrace I saw you quite plainly; you were talking to a man at a gate only a few yards from me—an awful foreign-looking blighter with a perfectly abominable moustache."

"Oh, George, if you only——"

"I hate your having friends I know nothing about, and I hate still more that my little girl should tell me fibs about it; but . . ."

Hilda dashed across the room and clung to him. Bit by bit the whole confession poured out, punctuated by frequent sobs. "I—I—wanted to give you some d-d-dainty dishes. You must have loathed the plain stodgy s-s-stuff I've given you every day for a year, and. . . ." And so the whole secret was laid bare.

"Now, now, don't cry," murmured George, when the outburst was over. "So the black-browed ruffian was only a cookery teacher, was he? I was an awful rotter to be so sulky about it, but you must admit he had a villainous moustache."

"He's an old dear, really. I'll take you round to see him to-morrow. And now am I forgiven?"

"Am I?" asked George, stroking her hair.

"Come along, then," said Hilda, April-smiling, "sit down and finish my marvellous dinner."

George sat down and eyed his plate rather doubtfully.

"I don't want to be ungrateful," he ventured apologetically, "but I don't know that I care very much for this stuff."

"Stuff?" echoed Hilda blankly.

"Yes," said George. "You see, I never

told you before, but when I was a kid, my father used to keep a restaurant—the only English one in Soho—and as a youngster I used to get so frantically fed up with these finicking dishes that I—I—I say, old girl, how long would it take to knock up a Yorkshire pudding?”

But Hilda was already flying kitchen-wards.

* * * * *

“There,” beamed George twenty minutes later, “wasn’t that a dainty dish to set before the king? You may come and kiss me when I’ve finished my third helping!”



THE UNSEEN GUEST.

IN a strange great bed
In a small strange town,
I laid my head
In heaviness down.
Abed betimes I lay,
Ere yet the light of the long day
Had sped.

On the further side
Of the market square
Windows were wide
And lamps aflame
In an upper room as for guests arrayed,
Where a woman sat and played:
No guests were there.

She was playing a tune
I had heard of old
On a night of June
In a youth of gold.
Listening I lay in the waning light.
She in that upper chamber bright
Played to a guest unseen, unknown,
And thought herself alone.

MICHAEL WILSON.



HAMPTON COURT PALACE: THE EASTERN FRONT.

THE BICENTENARY OF SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN

AND THE COMMEMORATION OF HIS
LEGACY OF NOBLE BUILDINGS

By WILL F. TAYLOR

Photographs by the Author

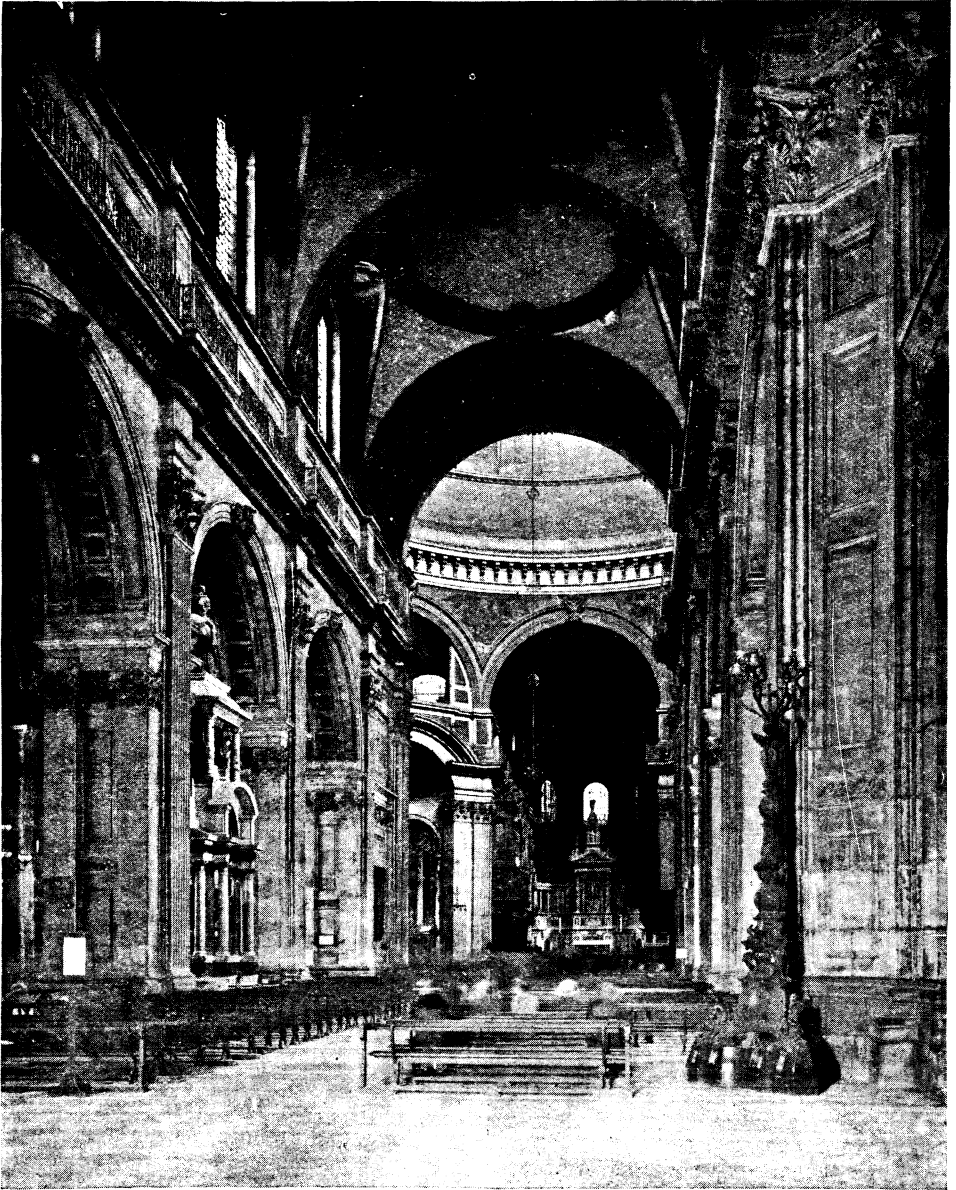
ONE winter afternoon, two hundred years ago, the servant of an old gentleman, living retired in a riverside house at Hampton Court, thought his master had slept longer than wont after the midday meal. When he sought him, the master was found quietly sunk from the diurnal into the final slumber. Thus perfectly had ended a life of rare length and still rarer intensity of work. From those quiet fingers, under the keen direction of a

masterly brain, had come work of amazing volume, and, from the nature of the medium, work of lasting and everyday notice.

Some seventy years before this, John Evelyn had noted in his diary a first acquaintance with "that miracle of a youth, Christopher Wren," and in the years between that and this winter afternoon at Hampton the then boy had fixed by his thought and imagination the seal of his forms on what may still be called, though by a narrowing

margin, the biggest city of the world. Never has an architect had the opportunities of Christopher Wren. The Great Fire of London swept the ground clean, and it was Wren who rebuilt more than fifty churches

It is still more true to say that to the lover of architecture a walk through the City streets is apt to prove a desert save for the sight of the buildings due to his hand. Too many have been pulled down, but there



THE NAVE OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

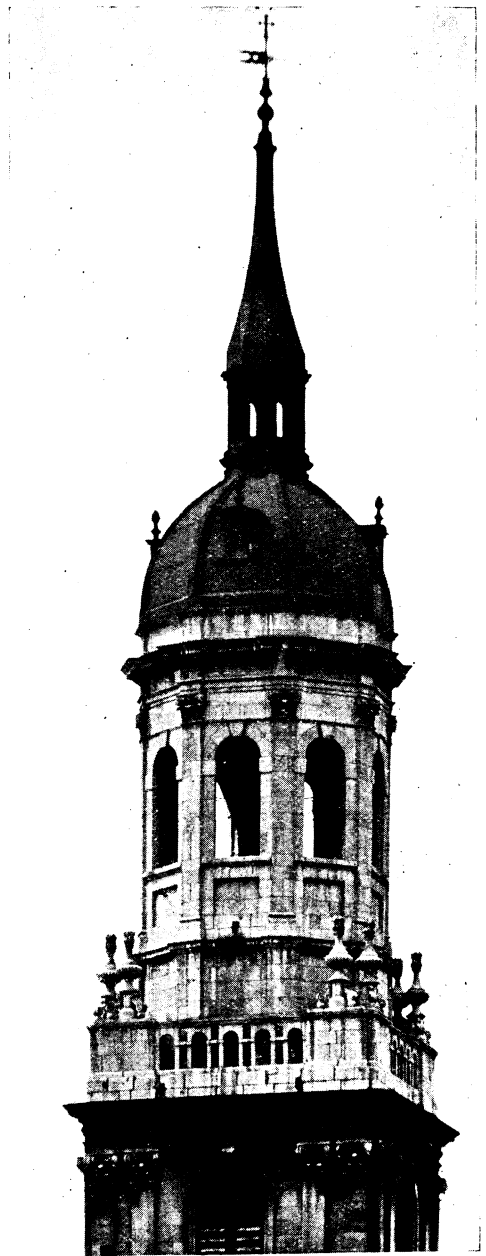
and the mother-church of St. Paul. Coming into the City by the secular entry of London Bridge, it is true to say that the tone of the silhouette of London is still set by the spires and the one master dome of Wren's building.

still remain many beautiful churches. Nor is this all: in outer London Greenwich Hospital is mainly Wren, and the exquisite mixture of dignity and homeliness of Chelsea Hospital is entirely his work. Then further

off is the block of Hampton Court Palace, in which Wren showed finally what could be done in colour and proportions with the simple materials of brick with stone dressings. These last three buildings alone would make an architect's name if they stood by themselves as a life's work. Then there is notable Wren work at Oxford and Cambridge; another palace at Winchester,



THE TOWER AND STEEPLE OF ST. MARY-LE-BOW,
CHEAPSIDE.



THE STEEPLE OF ST. MAGNUS, LONDON BRIDGE.

which was almost completed, has vanished; and beyond all this official and ecclesiastical work, his hand is known or guessed in minor domestic works. Indeed, so completely did he express the national tendency to sobriety and homely good taste in design, that in the ordinary housework of the early eighteenth century it is not easy to tell where his

own hand ends and his influence on others starts.

Greatest of English architects, both in opportunities and in results, and, indeed, probably first of all workers in the craft—for



ST. LAURENCE JEWRY.

no one personality can be credited with such works as the Parthenon or Amiens Cathedral—it is strange to think that he may almost be said to have been started in his work as the result of Court jobbery. His father was

a prominent Churchman of the Laudian revival. His uncle, Matthew Wren, Bishop of Ely, was still more distinguished for his Anglicanism, and was a fellow-prisoner in the Tower with Laud. He did not leave there, like Laud, for the block, but remained a prisoner all the period of the Interregnum. So good a family record of steadiness for Church and State deserved reward, and, in truth, Wren's lift to the top level of opportunity in architecture is due to this Court influence. But for this he might have remained a mathematical student and made his mark thus. Charles had already appointed as Chief Surveyor Sir John Denman, a poet. When the Deputy Surveyorship became vacant, it should, by right of architectural practice and knowledge, have gone to John Webb, the pupil of Inigo Jones; but young Christopher Wren got the job above his head, and Webb retired to the country in disgust.

Up to this time Wren's meteoric career had shown a mathematical trend and a taste for odd and useful inventions. When Evelyn was at Oxford in 1654, he visited the "most obliging and universally curious Dr. Wilkins," who showed him a "variety of shadows, dials, perspectives, and many other artificial, mathematical, and magical curiosities, a way-wiser, a thermometer, a monstrous magnet, most of them of his own and that prodigious young scholar Mr. Chris. Wren, who presented me with a piece of white marble, which he had stained with a lively red very deepe, as beautiful as if it had been natural."

The way-wiser was a contrivance, worked from the axle of a coach, to register the "perches, furlongs, miles, tens of miles, and



CHELSEA HOSPITAL: THE GARDEN FRONT.



CHELSEA HOSPITAL: THE CENTRAL BLOCK, WITH THE CHAPEL ON THE RIGHT, THE DINING HALL ON THE LEFT, AND STATUE OF THE FOUNDER, KING CHARLES II., IN THE FOREGROUND.

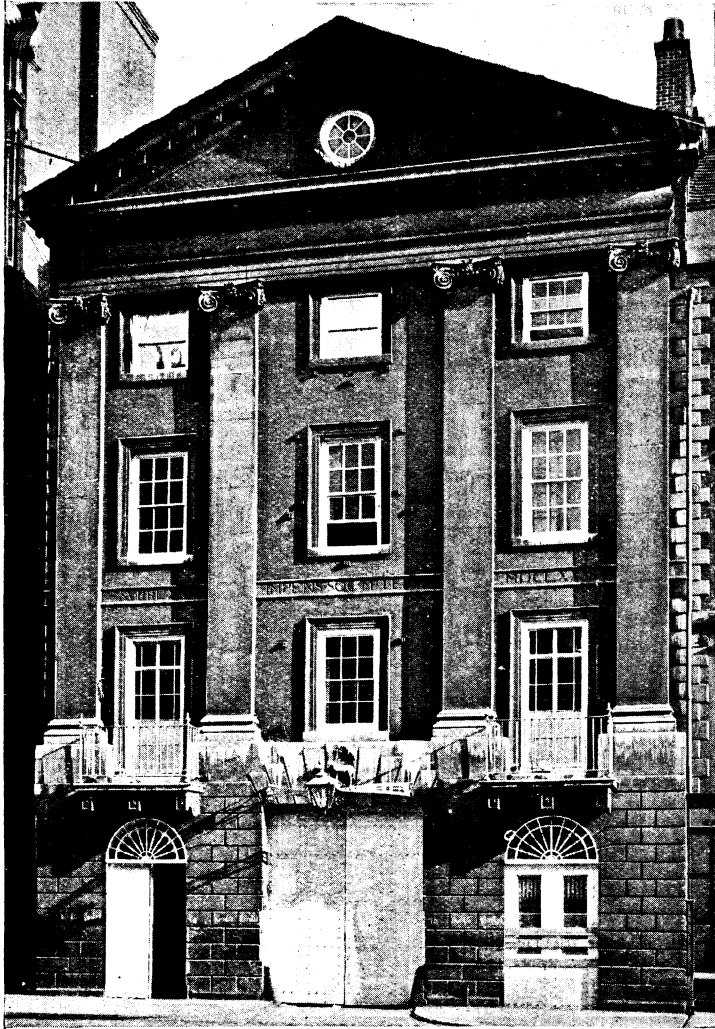
hundreds of miles" on five several dials. Later on, in 1661, when Wren was advising what scientific experiments should be collected to give His Majesty a just view of the scope of the newly formed Royal Society, he wrote that "'Tis not every Year will produce a Master-experiment as the Torri-

between both, luciferous in Philosophy, and yet whose Use and Advantage is obvious, and without a Lecture. . . . Sciographical Knacks, of which yet a hundred Varieties may be given, are so easy in the Invention, that now they are cheap. Scenographical, Catoptical and Dioptrical Tricks require

excellent Painting, as well as Geometrical Truth in the Profile, or else they deceive not. . . . Experiments for the Establishment of natural Philosophy are seldom pompous; 'tis upon Billiards, and Tennis-Balls; upon the purling of Sticks and Tops; upon a Viol of Water, or a Wedge of Glass, that the great Des Cartes hath built the most refined and accurate Theories that human Wit ever reached to; and certainly Nature in the best of her Works is apparent enough in obvious Things, were they but curiously observed; and the Key that opens Treasures, is often plain and rusty, but unless it be gilt, 'twill make no Show at Court." So, concludes Christopher Wren: "I know not what Shift to make, but to retire back to something I have formerly produced"; and he advises a "Needle that would play in a Coach, will be as well useful to know the Coast and Way joined with the Way - Wiser" as an

acceptable present to His Majesty, "who might thus as it were sail by land . . . it should be placed on the Middle of the Floor of the Coach, where by opening a Window you might see likewise the Way-Wiser on the Perch."

A catalogue—elsewhere quoted in "Parentalia," the work in which his son preserved sundry records of him—of Wren's

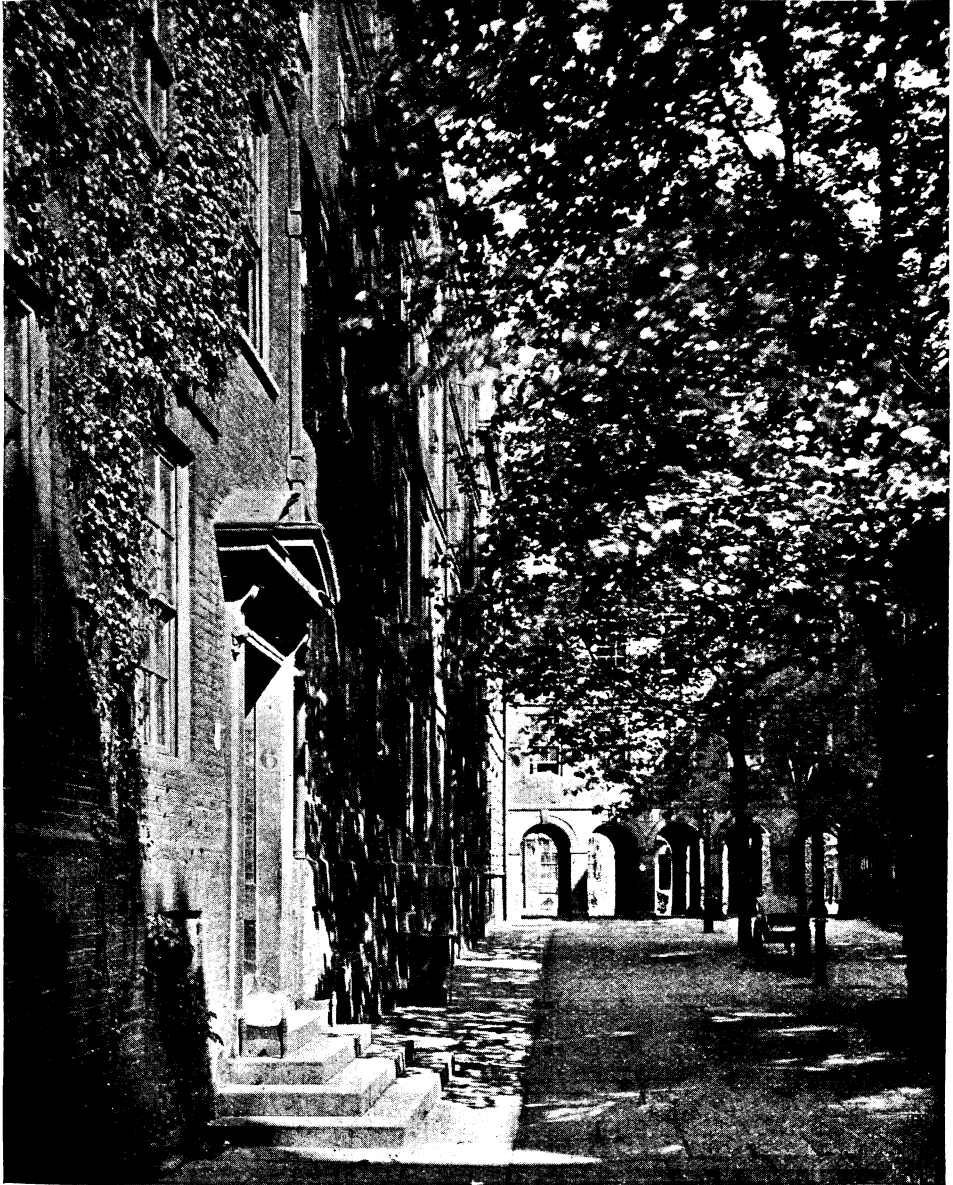


THE MIDDLE TEMPLE GATEWAY, FLEET STREET.

cellian . . . if you have any notable Experiment that may appear to open new Light into Principles of Philosophy, nothing would better bessem the Pretensions of the Society . . . On the other Side, to produce Knacks only, and Things to raise Wonder, such as Kercher, Scottus, and even Jugglers abound with, will scarce become the Gravity of the Occasion: It must therefore be something

"New Theories, Inventions, Experiments and Mechanik Improvements," includes such things as the "Weather Wheel; Strainer of the Breath to make the same Air serve in Respiration; To write in the Dark;

War; Easier Ways of Whale-fishing." This long diversion may be excused if it shows the eminently practical mind of the young Wren, a trend which is marked through his whole architectural work.



PUMP COURT, TEMPLE.

A Pavement harder, fairer and cheaper than Marble; A Way of Imbroidery for Beds, Hangings, cheap and fair; Divers new Musical instruments; Fabric for a Vessel of

From these early years at Oxford, and from the fact that he was Gresham Professor of Astronomy at twenty-four, Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford, Doctor

of Laws of both Oxford and Cambridge at twenty-nine, and prominent among the founders of the Royal Society, there is little to suggest what Wren's work was to be. Probably his earliest architectural work was a commission for a doorway in Ely Cathedral, soon followed by the carrying out of his design for the chapel at Pembroke College, Cambridge. It is usual to say that Wren learnt his craft by long practice through trial and error, learning from his mistakes as buildings grew under his hands; but the

saw the Renaissance style as worked out in the home of the classical revival. Wren's only time abroad was the few months he spent in Paris in 1665. Here he found the Frenchman Mansard and the Italian Bernini busy with the constructions with which Le Roi Soleil was marking his young flush of power. Wren wrote from Paris: "The Louvre for a while was my daily Object, where no less than a thousand Hands" (paid, as Wren elsewhere thought it worth noting, "every Sunday duly") "are constantly employ'd



CHRIST CHURCH, NEWGATE STREET.

Pembroke Chapel is already a master's work, and only an artist's subtlety could have drawn the proportions of the little belfry. Here, and in the warm common-sense with which the more classical façade is treated, are Wren's characteristics, a new touch and an original outlook on the builder's craft. Of course he learnt power and reserve with the immense practice that came to his hands, but the individual power of brain and eye is apparent at once in this early work.

The other great English Renaissance architect Inigo Jones travelled in Italy, and

in the Works, some in laying mighty Foundations, some in raising the Stories, Columns, Entablements etc. with vast Stones by great and useful Engines; others in Carving, Inlaying of Marbles, Plastering, Painting, Gilding etc., which altogether make a School of Architecture, the best probably, at this Day in Europe."

Wren returned to England a few months before the Great Fire of London, and after that he had little leisure from the conduct of his own "School of Architecture" whilst rebuilding went on. There is little to tell of his private life, seemingly a quiet one in

his home and with his friends and his work. In 1669 he married; Christopher Wren with Faith Coghill: how the lilt of the names carries the breath of the century! The essence of the time, too, and his own playful sincerity are in a letter the lover wrote to Faith about a watch of hers damaged by water. "Madam, The artificer having never before mett with a drowned Watch; like an ignorant physician has been soe long about the cure, that he hath made me very unquiet that your commands should be soe long deferred; however, I have sent the watch at last and envie the felicity of it, that it should be soe neer your side, and soe often enjoy your Eye, and be consulted by you how your time shall passe while you employ your hand in your excellent workes. But have a care of it, for I put such a Spell into it, that every Beating of the Ballance will tell you, 'tis the pulse of my Heart which labours as much to serve you and more trewly than the watch; for the watch I beleeve will sometimes lie, and sometimes perhaps be idle and unwilling to goe, having received soe much injury by being drenched in that briny bath, that I dispair it should ever be a Trew Servant to you more: But as for me (unlesse you drown me too in my Teares) you may be confident I shall never cease to be, Your most affectionate, humble Servant, Chr. Wren." His first wife having died only a few years later, he married again

in 1676, but his second wife also died young, leaving him with two children, besides the son of his first marriage.

Wren's main work in the reconstruction of London was rebuilding the churches and the cathedral. He and his friend John Evelyn had both drawn up proposals to plan the



ST. STEPHEN'S, WALBROOK.

City on a broad scheme, with great avenues leading outwards from its centre, with long vistas to the river and the cathedral, and quays along the Thames; but these, though approved by the strong common-sense of the King, broke against the conservatism of the City and the impatience to rebuild what shelter it could on the old sites. So Wren's churches are on the

earlier sites of endless variety of shape, and he tackled the problems with endless originality. On these queer plans grew a set of churches which are a complete break with anything known in England before; there had been practically no ecclesiastical

and mace rests of the official Corporation pews. St. Mildred's, Bread Street, has been least altered, but St. Margaret's, Lothbury, and St. Margaret Pattens perhaps are more interesting, and, save the altered pews, the modernisation has been kept well in hand.

Also any visitor to St. Paul's should step into St. Martin's, Ludgate, a few yards down the hill. A few steps up from the banality of Ludgate Hill the visitor is in the atmosphere of two hundred years ago. A miniature interior is made amazingly dignified with a half-dozen lofty columns, and the unusual height in proportion to the length seems to blend well with remembrance of the hill outside climbing steeply to the cathedral. Pulpit, redos, and stately organ are the original work.

Something of the same use of columns on a broad scale and with an added dome, which may be regarded as an early experiment foreshadowing the greater design for St. Paul's, make the famous interior of St. Stephen's, Walbrook. A totally different interior is the uncompromisingly domestic quality of St. Nicholas Cole Abbey, the first church rebuilt by Wren after the Fire, just a box, and not a large one either. But look at the exterior of this box. The north façade,



GREENWICH HOSPITAL.

building since the fifteenth century. The mystery of the Mass had gone, and Wren built for the domestic gathering of citizens to hear a plain service and a good sermon. Very few of the interiors remain now to represent the prosperous comfort of the post-Fire church as completed with tall pews and richly carved wood, the fanciful sword

the one principally shown as originally planned, is drawn with an amazing power of dignity; the few square yards of Portland stone have a completely satisfying strength and scale. It is this sense of living proportion which is Wren's most charming side. Perhaps it was founded in his mathematical training, blended with a playful spirit. He

lived when the burst of song of the Elizabethan madrigal singers, link between mediæval and modern music, had changed into the polished yet fresh melodies of Purcell. Music was very vital in Wren's days, and there is a music of design in his work, especially in the spires. These are usually later than the body of the church, and always rise on their own base direct from the ground. The highest and most famous is St. Mary-le-Bow. Sir Reginald Blomfield says there is in this a faint reminiscence of the Jacobean designers, and

should have attached to the upper part of the façade itself the iron stays of a street lamp.

Of St. Martin's steeple Sir Reginald Blomfield, in his valuable "History of Renaissance Architecture in England," says: "Its tall, slender outline, poised in the middle distance from the top of Ludgate Hill, at once throws back the tremendous mass of St. Paul's, and at the same time calls attention to its magnificent silhouette." It may well be held that in all Renaissance architecture there is no one effect so moving



THE ORANGERY, KENSINGTON GARDENS.

that the later spires of St. Bride's and St. Magnus are a purer model. But all three are exquisite creations.

In his interesting work "Wren's City Churches" Mr. Mackmurdo says of St. Martin's, Ludgate: "The grace and delicacy of this steeple form, as its spire in trembling notes ascends the sky, are of such a quality that words can hardly awaken that true sense of form by which alone such a pure lyric in architecture can be appreciated." It is one of the subtle mysteries of civic planning that the authorities should select the pavement in front of this perfect work as the site of a street scavenger's pedestal, and

and satisfying as the singular purity of the dome of St. Paul's, "as soft in outline, as tender in graduated light as any summer cloud," says Mr. Mackmurdo. Wordsworth wrote that it "does typify infinity's embrace." For St. Paul's and the tremendous weight of the dome Wren built massive foundations, and even now the danger to the dome does not come from these. The whole account of pulling down the ruins and digging the foundations, as given in the "Parentalia" by his son, is intensely interesting. A typical touch of Wren's quality is the incident that to blow up the piers of the old ruins he so nicely calculated the

charge and its position that the huge pier was raised bodily and fell quietly, whilst a subordinate, thinking to improve, used a larger charge for the next pier, and sent stones rattling through the citizens' houses. When searching the ruins, a stone was sought to mark the centre of the future dome; it was found to be inscribed "Resurgam." The exquisite grace of the dome and the strength of the colonnade at its base are best seen from the south of the river at Bankside; but from near or far St. Paul's is still the master of London. On a clear day from Hampstead, or as the writer has often seen it from the hills miles away in Surrey, whatever the scale of distance, it is perfect. Not so often noted is the varied play of light in the western towers, admirably set as foils to the simpler dome. The first stone was laid in 1675, and Wren lived to see his son place the final stone of the dome lantern in 1710.

It is sad to recall that the latter years of Wren's work on St. Paul's were troubled by unworthy opposition. His salary for the work there—the very modest sum of two hundred pounds a year—was withheld on the plea that the work was being unduly delayed, and intrigue led to his being superseded as Surveyor-General. Before that he was for a period Surveyor-General of repairs at Westminster Abbey and Comptroller of the Works at Windsor Castle. He was Member of Parliament for Windsor.

Little has been said here of Wren's work at Oxford and Cambridge. At the latter he built Emmanuel College Chapel and Trinity College Library, and at Oxford the Chapel of Trinity College and Tom Tower, Christ Church, both delightful works, are his, as well as some very early work at the Sheldonian, and the chapel and hall of Queen's College.

But he is pre-eminently the architect of London. In addition to the greater works already written about, he did two fine things which have now migrated to the country—the entrance to Christ's Hospital and the entrance to the City, Old Temple Bar. Beside the old site of the last there remains a finer gateway still, the beautifully proportioned and delicately restrained entrance to the Middle Temple.

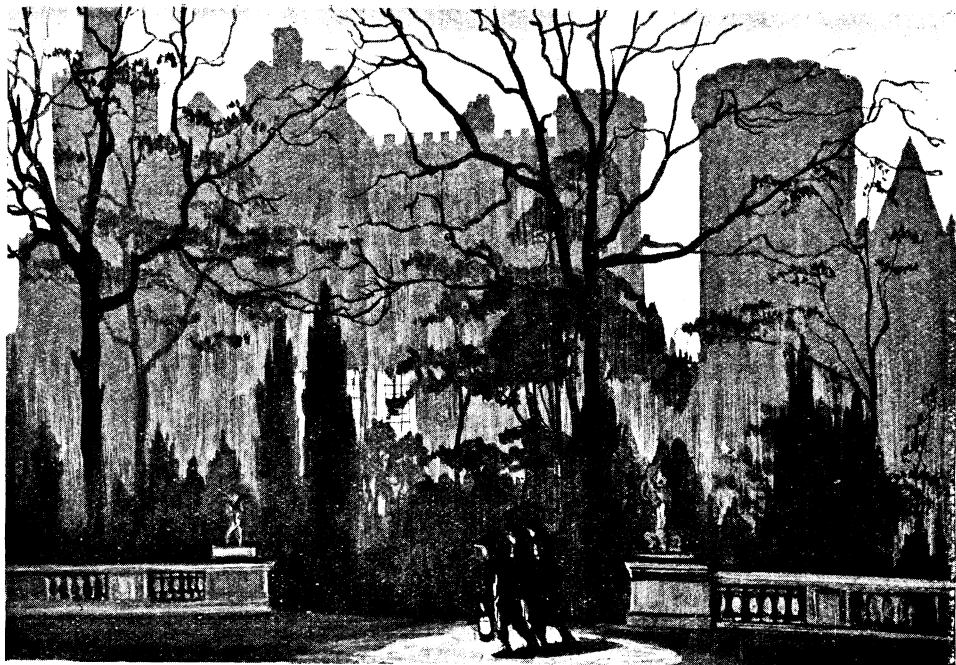
Close to the Temple is St. Clement Danes, where Wren's church has been completed with a spire by his pupil Gibbs. Perhaps, too, of his City work the Monument should

be remembered, from the top of which an excellent idea of the power of Wren's work can be seen in the panorama of his spires, and he probably did a certain amount of work in the City Companies' Halls, though these are not claimed for him in "Parentalia." In 1709 he built Marlborough House for the great Duke, but here a storey has been added at a later date.

Sir Thomas Jackson has recently said of Greenwich Hospital that he thinks there is "nothing finer, I might almost say nothing so fine in the whole range of neo-classic architecture." Here, again, Wren has drawn an exquisite dome shape, and the whole scheme for the parts of the palace that he built is in his strongest and purest style. Indeed, it may be said of his three great civil works, Greenwich, Chelsea, and Hampton Court, that he is here working with his greatest reserve and mastery, and the two qualities are inevitably mingled.

Greenwich Hospital is the most monumental of the three. Chelsea Hospital is more specifically English, and Hampton Court is exactly the home for William the Third, a King and the son of a homely and trading people. Chelsea is, perhaps, most typical Wren, and is one complete and noble design, the country house worked out to a communal use, with admirable and kindly common-sense. At Greenwich, Inigo Jones had already set the key to a more palatial treatment, and the site, gently rising from the great river entrance to London, suggests the grander notes of the twin domes and the long symmetrical colonnades. Wren's two façades at Hampton Court, in their lovely setting of flowers and trees, make a whole of unsurpassed beauty. It is the classic example of what can be done with the simplest materials of beautiful colour. Wren spent his last years and died at a house on the green just outside the gates of the Palace, and it was his custom to go once a year to pray beneath the dome of St. Paul's. The man who could create two such different works as the Palace and the Cathedral, each so supreme in its type, deserves a great place in the list of human endeavour.

For the use of certain biographical and other material from Miss Lena Milman's "Sir Christopher Wren" in this article, including quotations from documents first printed in that comprehensive work, we are indebted to the kind permission of its publishers, Messrs. Duckworth and Company.



"The little group, crossing the courtyard in the circle of dim light."

AT THE CHÂTEAU DE MILLEROY

By C. KENNETT BURROW

ILLUSTRATED BY EMILE VERPILLEUX.

At what hours the Café Grenier opened and closed will always remain a mystery. Jean Rimbaud asserted that the place was something of a miracle and immune from the hazards of time. This view was accepted as being, perhaps, as near the truth as any definition of the undefinable can get. It is not, however, on reputable record that anyone remained there for more than twenty hours on end, and the particular individual who made that prolonged stay was a poet of the *intime* variety who could not get a hearing.

The time was seven in the morning. Jean Rimbaud was sitting at a table in his usual corner, glancing through a newspaper—the newspaper in the galaxy of whose staff he shone with individual lustre. At

the moment he had the Café Grenier to himself. Suddenly he heard the hum of a motor-car, and it was a characteristic and familiar hum.

"Madame Blanchefleur—at this time in the morning!" he said to himself as he rose.

It was, unquestionably, Madame Blanchefleur. She entered the Café Grenier like a breath of spring, though the month was October and the boulevards were whispering, sometimes almost clamouring, of decay and death. Rimbaud caught his breath. If he represented Paris (and in the pride of his heart he sometimes imagined that he did), Madame Blanchefleur represented that and something more—so much more that his own personality was abashed by hers.

"You here, Jean?" she said.

"To tell you the truth, I am too tired to go to my rooms."

"You have not been to bed?"

"I was in charge last night," Jean said, pointing to the newspaper.

"And, being a man of conscience, you waited till the machines had stopped running?"

"Precisely. I also had other work to do. But now I am free for two days. But what, may I ask, are you doing here at this hour?"

Madame Blanchefleur smiled and beckoned to Borel, the proprietor of the Café Grenier, who was hovering, like a benign and substantial deity, in the background. Borel never obtruded himself, but he was always there. He now advanced, bowing, with an air of intimate yet respectful concern that was a triumph of sincere art.

"This is indeed an honour," he said, "at such an hour. It will be a day of good fortune for the Café Grenier."

"It is not the first time, M. Borel, that I have called at the same hour on the same errand."

"And on the same date of the same month," said Borel.

"You have a prodigious memory!"

"Without it I should be lost, ruined, extinct!"

Jean Rimbaud looked from one to the other blinking. A wave of physical and mental weariness seemed to lift him off his feet, as it were, and drift him towards oblivion. But he woke up again as Madame Blanchefleur proceeded.

He heard her giving instructions to Borel for the packing of a hamper. Madame Blanchefleur was precise as to every item of food and wine, and Borel nodded approval as he made notes. Jean reflected that if he had been giving such an order, Borel would have made suggestions, but he did not venture to advise this client.

"Can all be ready in half an hour?" Madame Blanchefleur concluded.

"Say forty minutes. Yes, absolutely packed and ready in forty minutes."

"Good," said Madame Blanchefleur. "I will return in forty minutes precisely."

"One might imagine that this was June," said Jean, "and that you were going to entertain a distinguished party at a picnic."

"I am going on a pilgrimage," said Madame Blanchefleur.

"Oh, if you choose to be enigmatic, I shall go to sleep."

"Do, my poor Jean. And in forty minutes—no, thirty-five—I will return and wake you up."

"Will you drive me to some place where I can forget Paris and remember that I have an immortal soul?"

"But yes, assuredly."

"And then," he said, "I shall sleep like Borel's cat."

Jean watched Madame Blanchefleur back the blue-and-white automobile from the narrow street (to which alone the Café Grenier gave distinction) into a wider thoroughfare which descended towards the river. Then he returned to the dim interior of the Café Grenier, drank coffee, and closed his eyes. Now and then, when a door leading to the kitchen mysteries was opened by a waiter, Jean could hear Borel's voice, which somehow seemed to suggest, in its variety of inflections, the infinite possibilities of civilisation in the matter of food. Jean, indeed, who had known lean years, retained a certain awe of Borel which was equal to Borel's awe of Madame Blanchefleur, for though the arts may constitute a republic, reverence is not excluded.

He closed his eyes, but the immediate desire for sleep had passed. He was, however, too tired to think or to conjecture on what pilgrimage Madame Blanchefleur was about to set forth. Conjecture concerning that lady, indeed, was generally futile, and, anyway, it was no concern of his. He was in a condition of supreme passivity.

It seemed to Jean that no more than five minutes had passed when he heard the hum of the returning car. At the same moment Borel and a waiter appeared with the hamper. The timing was perfect.

"You are a wonderful person, M. Borel," said Madame Blanchefleur. "And now, perhaps, you will wake up M. Rimbaud."

Jean emerged from the *café*, seated himself beside Madame Blanchefleur, the hamper was strapped on to the carrier, and Borel made a final salutation. Presently the blue-and-white car was gliding south-eastwards. Hardly a word passed between the pair until they were beyond the fortifications. Then Rimbaud said:

"You are a kind of Providence, especially as Madame Blanchefleur. I presume that I am right in supposing that to-day it is Madame Blanchefleur?"

"Yes; not, however, that it is of much consequence."

"One never knows," said Jean. He relapsed into silence. The easy motion, the

hazy sunshine, the warming air, made him sleepy again.

"You have as little curiosity as a dormouse," said Madame Blanchefleur.

"Curiosity? Heavens! I am one nerve of curiosity!"

"Forgive me. I was forgetting that while I slept you were working. Sleep, then, now. But where do you wish to be put down?"

"Anywhere. I am in your hands. I have resigned responsibility. But, for choice, leave me at an inn covered with vine leaves that fall in golden flakes; and it should be near a river; and nobody should ever have heard of it before."

"You become sentimental. Again I say, sleep!"

"Dare I obey?"

"Have I not commanded?"

"Good," Jean murmured, closing his eyes.

Madame Blanchefleur reduced speed and proceeded with the care of a devoted nursemaid controlling a perambulator. All men, indeed, appeared to her to be a good deal like children. And Jean was, on the whole, a good child. He had made his mark in Paris, which remains, after all, the most intelligently critical city in the world, and he was always ready to learn. She felt almost motherly towards him.

No inns, either by the wayside or in town or village, appeared to fulfil Jean's conditions. He slumbered peacefully, with occasional starts into semi-consciousness, until they reached Montargis. He was fully awake when the car stopped at the Hôtel de la Poste.

"Here," said Madame Blanchefleur, "we will have lunch."

"But where is my inn?" cried Jean.

"In your imagination."

"For the present I submit. But we shall get nothing here to equal the contents of your magical hamper."

"So you are interested in the hamper?"

"Immensely."

"Then you must be patient. But understand that I make no promises."

"By the way," asked Jean, "what place is this?"

"Montargis."

"And I wanted to be dropped thirty miles from Paris!"

Towards the end of the meal Madame Blanchefleur said:

"Have you still no curiosity about my pilgrimage?"

Jean smiled. "My dear lady," he said,

"it is because I am profoundly curious that I ask no questions."

Madame Blanchefleur frowned slightly. "Now it is you who are enigmatic," she said. "But no matter. I have decided to take you with me. It may do you good."

"Am I now permitted to ask questions?"

"At present I shall tell you nothing," said Madame Blanchefleur.

"Very well. But remember that the entire responsibility is yours."

"I only ask you to behave with circumspection."

"That is my most pronounced quality," said Jean, with a shrug and a sigh.

About fifteen miles or so beyond Montargis Madame Blanchefleur guided the car into a by-road which presently crossed a tumbling stream by an ancient stone bridge.

"Now I only need the inn!" cried Jean.

"It is there," said Madame Blanchefleur, pointing. "But instead of a vine it has a fig tree."

Jean gasped. "The very place! Is this also the end of your pilgrimage?"

"By no means."

"I suppose, when I return, the place will have vanished," Jean grumbled. "There is some witchery about. I can feel it in the air."

"The place is as real as Jean Rimbaud," said Madame Blanchefleur.

"But how real am I?"

"Come, come," she said. "If you begin to talk like that. . . ."

A mile farther on, just beyond a curve in the leaf-strewn road, great gates appeared. These opened as if by magic, and Madame Blanchefleur steered the car into the immense courtyard of a château whose main buildings were flanked by battlemented towers. And then, to complete his astonishment, Rimbaud saw Madame Blanchefleur leap to the ground and precipitate herself into the arms of a little old woman attired in decorous and frigid black.

"Natalie, my dear one!" cried the old lady. "I was on the look-out, you see."

"Yes, yes, dear heart!" murmured Madame Blanchefleur.

Here was a situation which Jean could not in the least comprehend. Not knowing what to do, he got out of the car and waited, trying to look unconcerned. He started violently as the gates closed with a clang.

"Do not be alarmed," said Madame Blanchefleur. "They are worked from the custodian's lodge. Allow me, Jean, to

present to you my friend and benefactress, Madame Vibart."

Jean bowed. Madame Vibart curtsied.

"Where is Alphonse?" asked Madame Blanchefleur.

"He is coming, coming. He has been sitting by the gate-levers for an hour."

"Ah, there he is!" An old man emerged limpingly from a door beneath a gallery on the left, and Madame Blanchefleur greeted him also with an affectionate embrace.

"This," she said to Jean, "is Monsieur Vibart. And now, if you will assist with that hamper. . . ."

Rimbaud once more resigned himself. The hamper was carried through the door under the gallery into a long, low room which at once seemed to banish the imposing château as a figment of the imagination. The contrast was too abrupt for reality between the somewhat stuffy and faded, bourgeois air of that apartment and the soaring and noble exterior which was now shut out. Jean glanced appealingly at Madame Blanchefleur.

"You are bewildered," she said. "Does it surprise you that my pilgrimage should end here?"

"I admit the bewilderment. As to surprise, you cannot expect me to admit that."

Madame Blanchefleur laughed softly. Then, taking Madame Vibart's hand, she made the old lady sit beside her on a somewhat decrepit sofa.

"I will explain," she said. "Madame Vibart—to me always dear Susanne—was my nurse, my friend, almost my mother. In the days of my father's poverty in Paris—he was always poor—we lodged with her and her good husband. I was four years old when Susanne took me to her heart."

"She was an adorable child—I could not help it," said Madame Vibart, wiping her eyes. "When she danced, sang, or merely sat still, she was adorable. Was she not, Alphonse?"

"Yes, yes," said Vibart, in a creaking voice, "she was a wonder-child."

"I do not doubt it," Jean said in a tone of rapt appreciation. "And she remains wonderful."

"This becomes absurd," said Madame Blanchefleur. "I remained with Susanne until, after my father's death, I had to face the world."

"And you conquered it," said Susanne.

"What chance had the world, I should like to know?" Jean demanded.

"My good Jean, you weary me. . . . These friends would accept no adequate return in the good days for their care of me in the bad days—"

"Nonsense!" cried Susanne. "Have you not made us many gifts? Did you not procure for us this refuge? Did you not always give us your love?"

"It was more than enough," creaked Alphonse.

"Well, well," said Madame Blanchefleur, "it is always the same thing with both of you. . . . Now, Jean, you understand why I make this pilgrimage to the Château de Milleroy on Susanne's birthday."

"The Château de Milleroy! Is this the place that was bought by Victor Legouvé from the Comte de St. Etienne?"

"Yes," said Madame Blanchefleur. "Arnaud Dorain was a friend of the Comte de St. Etienne, and it was by his influence that the Vibarts were appointed custodians. I have never seen M. Legouvé, but he has been kind to them."

"M. Legouvé," Susanne said, "comes only now and then, and sends from Paris servants to prepare for him. Only five rooms of the château are fully furnished. M. Legouvé has spoken of living here, but always he seems too much occupied with his affairs."

"Undoubtedly M. Legouvé is a busy man," said Jean drily. "And now I will walk back to that inn and rest."

"But, monsieur, you must return!" cried Susanne, glancing from the hamper to Madame Blanchefleur.

"Certainly he will return," said Madame Blanchefleur. Rimbaud rose and bowed to Susanne.

"I am honoured, madame," he said.

Under the guidance of Alphonse he left the château by way of a door close to the immense gates.

"You will find it open on your return," said the old man.

Rimbaud walked slowly back to the little village of Milleroy. The day had passed its noon. Diffused sunshine, almost indolently warm for the season, lay over fields and woods; fallen leaves, unsmirched as yet by the squalor of corruption, rustled round his moving feet; and the murmur of the stream seemed, as it were, to be the intimate voice of silence. He noticed these things, but absently. He still felt that Milleroy might be a dream; his physical

perceptions had about them a sense of insecurity—a sign, no doubt, of weariness. But his brain was alert, and it played from many angles, like a shifting searchlight, round the name and career of Legouvê. That name stood for wealth, power, intrepidity of purpose—admirable qualities and possessions, and yet he wondered.

He reached the inn of the fig tree, found it to be entirely substantial, and, after some little delay, was provided with a room where he might rest quietly. Most visitors to the Château de Milleroy, the landlord explained, accommodated themselves at Beauregard, where there was a railway station. Nobody ever came to the village of Milleroy; it was out of the world.

At six o'clock, completely refreshed, Jean re-entered the courtyard of the château by the side-door. The first wave of twilight was already washing the lower courses of the great building, but its upper storeys and towers, in which survived the spirit of the Renaissance, still took splendour from the declining sun. Once again, as he entered the custodians' room, all that memorial beauty seemed to fade from the material world.

Madame Blanchefleur had transformed herself into a housewife of extreme elegance. In an overall of unbleached linen, drawn in at the waist by a narrow belt, she presented to Jean a vision of sublimated domesticity. Susanne, sitting apart, smiling and nodding, was permitted to do nothing.

"You will perceive," said Madame Blanchefleur, "that I am preparing Susanne's birthday feast. It is a great occasion."

"Great indeed," said Jean.

"But you are not merely to stand and stare! The table is laid. Now the hamper must be unpacked. To work, my poor Jean!" Rimbaud proceeded to unpack, but he was clumsy about it, and the hamper contained viands that pleaded for light handling. Madame Blanchefleur thrust him aside.

"I must do it all myself," she said. "Borel's reputation must be respected. If he saw your fumbings he would die of chagrin. Sit by Susanne and watch."

"But she is adorable, that one!" Susanne murmured to Jean. "Always she is the same. And to think that she has slept, a little child, in my arms!"

"Ah," said Madame Blanchefleur, "here is one of those hams, boiled in white wine, that Alphonse loves, and here are partridges, here stuffed olives, and here Paté de

Grénier. . . ." So she ran on. Then she suddenly became grave, drew herself up, and stood with hanging hands.

"Sacred Heaven!" she cried. "I forget the guava jelly!"

"No matter, no matter," said Susanne.

"It is a tragedy," declared Madame Blanchefleur. She fell to work again, and presently began to sing:

Once, when the world was very new
And all the dew was honey-dew—

La-liro-la—

The small Pierre and small Julie
Were free as little birds are free—

La-liro-la!

Alas, how soon the world grows old,
How soon departs the age of gold!—

La-liro-la—

Pierre, Julie, are free no more,
No honey-dew have they in store—

La-liro-la!

Yet grave Pierre and Julie sweet
Have children tumbling round their feet—

La-liro-la—

And though sun scorch or tempest sting,
Merry of heart they toil, and sing

La-liro-la!

A simple, altruistic, perhaps foolish song, but Madame Blanchefleur's wonderful voice gave to the words a reality which made the Château de Milleroy seem as unsubstantial as a cloud above earth. Susanne was deeply affected; so, for that matter, was Jean.

"Who made that song?" he asked. She shook her head.

"I cannot say. It is my version of a peasant song I heard in Brittany. . . . Susanne, will you take M. Rimbaud over the château?"

"It has grown too dark," he said. "I will see it to-morrow. To-night I shall stay at the inn of the fig tree."

Rimbaud asked himself why he had made that excuse. As a matter of fact, the increasing twilight would have added to the romance of the Château de Milleroy. It was the song, he concluded, that had put him out of key with the gold and crimson of a story whose protagonists were now less than a little dust. And also the thought of Legouvê slipped in—Legouvê, whose romance was of the Bourse. These incongruities were profoundly interesting.

It was almost dark when Alphonse returned from a conscientious tour of the château. It took him a long time, because rheumatism was slowly crippling him, and asthma made him wheeze.

"Well," said Madame Blanchefleur, "did you see any ghosts?"

"Not to-night. But I have seen one."

"That was all imagination," Susanne said.

"No, it was not imagination. I have none."

"What did you see?" Madame Blanchefleur asked, for Jean's benefit. She had heard the story before.

"It was on the great lawn by the fountain. I was looking from a window of the long gallery on just such a night as this. It was almost dark, and yet I could see the leaves falling, falling. And I said to myself, 'This is strange. How is it that I can see those leaves?'"

"Was the window open?" Rimbaud asked.

"Yes, monsieur. I was leaning out, because I fancied I had heard a footstep below. This was before the Comte sold the château to M. Legouvé."

"The footsteps were just the leaves falling," said Susanne.

"That is possible. But though my ears may have been deceived, my eyes were not." Alphonse paused. His curious, creaking voice ceased on a kind of sob. For a time there was no sound in the room save that of his asthmatic breathing and the low sissing of the wood fire.

"I noticed," he went on, "that I could see the drifting leaves only near the fountain. There seemed to be, just there, a little grey mist, and the leaves showed against it as they fell. It was a mist—how shall I say?—that had light in it, and yet it gave no light. And then that faded, and I saw the face of a woman—first the face, and then the



"Ah! . . . Then you were about to take the cure that ends all things?"

whole form. I cannot say how she was dressed, but over her bosom and about her waist and even down to her feet were little points of fire that danced and changed, and yet these also gave no light."



not endure it. I had to close my eyes. And when I opened them the woman had gone, but the mist was by the fountain and again I could see the leaves, but only for a moment. . . . Then my wits almost left me, for I felt a hand on my shoulder."

Alphonse paused again; the eyes both of Madame Blanche fleur and Rimbaud were fixed on the man's lean and many-wrinkled face, which, in the varying light of the hearth-flames, seemed to fade and reappear and fade again fantastically.

"It was the Comte de St. Etienne, my master. 'Did you see her?' he asked. 'I saw,' I said, and could get no further. 'So did I,' he said, 'and not for the first time.' 'M. le Comte,' I said, 'for the love of God, who was that lady?' 'Why, Diane le Poitiers, to be sure,' he answered. 'But such sorrow in a face,' I cried. 'Is it possible for the rich and great to suffer such sorrow?' 'My good Vibart,' he said, 'you are too simple for this world.' And he left me by the window; but I did not look

"No," said Legouvé, "I was about to return the box to my pocket."

"Gems," murmured Rimbaud. "She had the finest gems in France."

"The face, monsieur, was of a terrible sadness. I had never before seen so great beauty and so terrible sadness. I could

towards the fountain again."

"For the love of Heaven," cried Susanne, "let us leave such things alone. I, for one, hate them." The sudden switching on of an electric light startled Jean; here was

another incongruity. The meal began in a subdued atmosphere; it was as though the shadows and memories of the Château de Milleroy pervaded, like a chilly autumnal mist, the homeliness of the custodians' room. But after a time Borel's admirable food and wine restored the sense of proportion, and the vague past was banished by the realisable present. The little party grew merry; even from Alphonse the years seemed to fall away, and to Susanne, Madame Blanchefleur became a child again.

"Ah, Natalie," she cried, "how you listened when your father played! You were all eyes and ears, and so quiet, so quiet! But always your little fingers moved. . . . To be sure, the room was too small for such music. And the stairs up to that room!"

"I loved the stairs," said Madame Blanchefleur, "and the little landings. Up or down, it was all one to me."

"But you liked to be carried up on my back," creaked Alphonse. "Sometimes you were tired." And so these reminiscent nothings, which mean so much, ran on. Rimbaud listened, only putting in a word now and then. He had seen Madame Blanchefleur play many parts, but now he asked himself whether she had ever played a part at all. Was she not always herself?

There was a sudden sputtering in the fire, and Alphonse said:

"Listen. It rains." This was followed by a deep silence. If Vibart had said that the world was coming to an end at that moment, the announcement could not have been received with greater gravity. And then into that silence, like a note of derision, fell the sound of footsteps. Alphonse started up.

"The side-door!" he cried. "I left it unlocked!"

"Well, why be alarmed by a footstep?" asked Madame Blanchefleur.

"It is not that," whispered Susanne. "He thinks he has failed in his duty."

Rimbaud also rose.

"Let us see who it is," he said. As he pushed back his chair, there came a sharp tapping at the door. Alphonse hurried to open it.

"M. Legouvé!" he cried.

Framed, as it were, in the arched entrance, with the light from within shining on his face and making the rain-drops glitter on his clothes, stood the owner of the Château de Milleroy. A wide-brimmed hat, pulled low over the forehead, left his eyes in shadow. His cheeks were pale, the nose

jutted out with a decisive prominence, and the full lips, also a little pale, were compressed.

"Have I your permission to come in, Vibart?" he asked.

"But yes, monsieur. . . . The little door, monsieur——"

"It was unlocked. But what matter? That merely saved us both trouble." It was not until M. Legouvé had taken a pace or two into the room that he became aware of Susanne and her guests; all were now on their feet. He had uncovered as he crossed the threshold, and stood, hat in hand, taking in the scene and bowing with complete composure. His gaze lingered for a searching moment on Madame Blanchefleur.

"This lady, monsieur——" Susanne began, and could get no further. It was very foolish, but the apparition of Diane de Poitiers could not have alarmed her more than the unexpected appearance of M. Legouvé.

"You have frightened our good Madame Vibart," said Madame Blanchefleur, taking control of the situation and giving Legouvé a smile which seemed indulgently to pardon him for an intrusion. "I, monsieur, am Madame Blanchefleur, and I am here with my friend, M. Rimbaud, to celebrate Madame Vibart's birthday. She was once my nurse."

At the mention of Rimbaud's name Legouvé glanced sharply at Jean. By this time Alphonse had recovered sufficiently to offer his master a chair. Legouvé sat down.

"Pardon me," he said. "I have walked from Beaugregard and am tired. . . . No explanation, madame, is necessary. Madame Vibart is at liberty to entertain what guests she pleases." Again he glanced at Rimbaud.

"I will prepare your rooms at once, monsieur," Susanne said. "As you know, monsieur, the bedroom and the small salon I always attend to myself, even when your own servants are here. But as to food, monsieur——"

"That is simple," said Madame Blanchefleur. "M. Legouvé can sup well on Borel's fare. You have heard, monsieur, of the Café Grenier?"

"Who has not? Once I dined there, but amongst artists I am like a sparrow amongst humming-birds."

"Well, to-night," said Madame Blanchefleur, "this is the Café Grenier—without the humming-birds."

Legouvé shook his head. "The invitation is tempting, but I am not hungry."

"Nevertheless, you will not refuse?"

"I must," said Legouv  , rising. "I have urgent matters to attend to."

"Then I will make a selection from Borel's delicacies and send them to you presently."

"If you insist——"

"Is it not obvious, monsieur, that you cannot be allowed to starve in the Ch  teau de Milleroy?" Legouv   smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and again glanced at Rimbaud.

"This lady," Jean said, speaking for the first time, "is a fountain of wisdom. I counsel you, monsieur, to be advised by her."

"Very well. I accept with gratitude, madame." Then he went out into the courtyard, followed by Susanne, and Alphonse carrying a great bunch of keys.

Left alone, Madame Blanchefleur and Jean looked at each other questioningly.

"What do you make of this?" Jean asked.

"Make of it? Why, simply that M. Legouv   had a sudden impulse to visit his wonderful ch  teau."

"But why come by rail to Beauregard? Why come unannounced and without even a personal servant? Why walk from the station in the rain?"

"Why not?" Madame Blanchefleur demanded. "It is precisely what I myself might have done."

"But M. Legouv   is not Madame Blanchefleur."

"Well, after all, we are in his house," said Madame Blanchefleur with some asperity. "I have no wish to discuss his reasons."

"A singular lack of curiosity!" said Jean.

"You have won your retort cheaply," said Madame Blanchefleur. She proceeded, with immense dignity, to set out on a tray such fare as she fancied would appeal to a tired magnate of the Bourse. M. Legouv   had, in fact, touched her in some mysterious way.

Susanne returned, carried the tray away, and then rejoined the others with Alphonse.

"M. Legouv   is quite comfortable," she said, "and he is hungry, after all. How strange that he should come to the Ch  teau de Milleroy like a wanderer out of the night!"

"They have strange fancies, these great ones," said Alphonse. "Sometimes the Comte would shut himself up for days together and see no one."

"It is not only the great who have strange fancies," said Madame Blanchefleur.

"I do not envy M. Legouv   to-night," Susanne said.

"Well, let us forget M. Legouv   for the present," cried Madame Blanchefleur. "This is your day, Susanne." Nevertheless, Susanne's day was over; the homely, reminiscent talk would not flow again; the figure of Legouv  , sitting solitary in his vast ch  teau over a chance meal, was clear in the mind of each.

An electric bell rang sharply in the room.

"That is M. Legouv  . I must have forgotten something," cried Susanne.

"I will go," said Alphonse. In a few minutes he returned. He had an air of importance, as though the office of custodian had been suddenly exalted.

"M. Legouv  ," he said, "presents to Madame Blanchefleur and M. Rimbaud his profound compliments, and begs that they will visit him in the Ch  teau de Milleroy. M. Legouv   awaits them."

"Heavens," cried Susanne, "you have it off like a parrot!"

"Let us go at once," said Madame Blanchefleur, rising. "When the bell rang, I knew what was about to happen."

"Yes," said Susanne, "Natalie always knew what was about to happen. There never was such a child."

There was no door of communication between the custodians' quarters and the ch  teau. Alphonse lit a horn lantern—it might have been a survival from the days of Diane de Poitiers—and stepped out into the darkness, followed by Madame Blanchefleur and Jean. Susanne watched them from the threshold.

The rain had turned to a misty drizzle. The immense, dark front of the ch  teau seemed to lift up and mingle with the low clouds. The little group, crossing the courtyard in the circle of dim light, appeared as insignificant as insects. What human hands had built not only dwarfed humanity, but made it appear almost ridiculous.

The room in which Legouv   received his visitors was furnished in admirable taste. No attempt had been made to turn it into a museum of antiques; nearly everything was modern, but so designed as to harmonise with the original mural and ceiling decorations, which had been carefully restored.

"Having received your hospitality, madame," Legouv   said, "it is my privilege to welcome you to the Ch  teau de Milleroy, and to renew my thanks."

"You found the food of the Café Grenier possible?" Madame Blanchefleur asked, smiling.

"Excellent. It, or something else, has worked like a charm. I am a different man." And, indeed, he did appear to have changed; his attitude was alert, his eyes were keenly observant. This, thought Rimbaud, was the real Legouvé, the man who controlled markets as a telephone operator controls the switchboard.

"I told you, monsieur," said Jean, "that Madame Blanchefleur's counsel was always wise."

"You follow it yourself, M. Rimbaud?"

"Always," said Jean. Legouvé had seated his guests by an oval table near a hearth on which Susanne had kindled a fire of beech logs. A high screen at the back detached a portion of the salon, making, as it were, a room within a room. On the table stood a decanter and wine glasses.

"At the moment," said Legouvé, "I can return your hospitality in only one way. Admirable as the Café Grenier may be, it cannot provide a wine like this. It is, madame, Tokay, imperial Tokay, and I assure that very little of it finds its way to France."

He filled three glasses; a faint aroma, delicate as the fragrance of the wild rose, allured the senses. Each sipped with the gravity which should always accompany the tasting of a supreme wine.

"It seems to suggest infinite beauty," said Madame Blanchefleur, "and is therefore appropriate to the Château de Milleroy."

"That also was my fancy," said Legouvé. "This place, madame, was a dream of mine."

"A dream that came true."

"Does not a dream slip from one's grasp in the realisation of it? Did it seem to you that I came here to-night like one who glories in a vision that has become a fact?" He spoke quietly, yet the tone thrilled Madame Blanchefleur like a cry of pain. Jean turned a speculative glance towards his glass. He had never imagined that Legouvé, the great financier, could be capable of sentiment.

"I saw only that you were tired," said Madame Blanchefleur.

"Tired? Yes. . . . It seems to me, madame, that every possessor of the Château de Milleroy must have taken over with it a burden of weariness." He rose abruptly to his feet and passed behind the screen. Madame Blanchefleur was inexplicably moved.

"This is an unusual entertainment," Jean murmured.

"Hush! You are unsympathetic."

"Possibly," Jean admitted.

The muffled sound of Legouvé's footsteps as he paced, with grave deliberation, the concealed spaces of the salon, had a fascination as of something remote, detached, like a faint echo. For an appreciable interval the sound ceased. Then Legouvé slipped round the screen and rejoined his guests.

"Madame Blanchefleur," he said, "a man in my position is, naturally, suspicious."

"Of his guests?" The question came from Rimbaud.

"For the moment, monsieur, I am addressing myself to Madame Blanchefleur."

"Proceed, monsieur," she said.

"To begin—you will pardon my abruptness—though you may be Madame Blanchefleur, you are not known to the world by that name."

"That is true. Do you suppose, monsieur, that I did not see that you recognised me at once as another person?"

"La Fadette, of the Théâtre Racine, is unmistakable," said Legouvé. "I will pay you no compliments. You need none."

"I am sick of compliments," said Madame Blanchefleur. Jean felt himself to be completely out of it. He had imagined a dramatic situation, but Madame Blanchefleur had carefully evaded it, and this was wholly unlike her.

"I do not doubt," said Legouvé, "that Madame Vibart was once your nurse, though she has maintained an extraordinary discretion in not mentioning that fact to me."

"The Comte de St. Etienne was aware of it. And you must remember, M. Legouvé, that you have seen little of your custodians or, for that matter, of the Château de Milleroy. Possibly you do not invite confidences."

"That, madame, I acknowledge. Nor, as a rule, do I bestow them, but in some circumstances—" He paused and glanced at Rimbaud. "Monsieur, allow me to refill your glass."

"I gather," said Jean, "that I am the suspected person. In which case I must clear my character before accepting that invitation."

"Ah, you apprehend the position!"

It was now Madame Blanchefleur's turn to be perplexed. "What is all this about?" she asked.

"That we shall presently discover," said Legouvé. "M. Rimbaud, why are you here to-day? Were you also nursed by Madame Vibart?"

"I never heard of Madame Vibart before this morning."

"But you have heard of me?"

"Undoubtedly. Who has not?"

"There have been certain rumours concerning me of late?"

"Yes," Jean admitted.

"And the newspaper with which you are associated, M. Rimbaud, has been persistent in circulating those rumours?" said Legouvé.

"That also is true," said Jean.

"Then you will admit that I have some reason for suspicion."

Jean suddenly became violently angry. Yet even in his anger he recognised that Legouvé had made a natural inference.

"Monsieur, you insult me!" he cried, rising so violently that the table was almost upset.

"Calm yourself, Jean, calm yourself," said Madame Blancheffleur, also rising.

"But——"

"Calm yourself, I repeat," she said in a tone that had in it a startling force of command. "M. Legouvé, being a man of intelligence, has merely arrived at a conclusion which could not have escaped him."

"Then, madame, you support me?" asked Legouvé.

"On the contrary. Though your conclusion was natural, it was entirely wrong." She reseated herself with the utmost composure, and motioned to Rimbaud to do the same. He obeyed like one under a spell.

"I know nothing of these rumours," she went on, "but I know that M. Rimbaud is incapable of spying for a newspaper. He is a man of letters, not a journalist of the gutter."

"I accept your assurance," said Legouvé, bowing. "But some explanation seems necessary."

"The explanation is simple. As a matter of fact, when M. Rimbaud left Paris with me this morning, he had not the faintest idea where he was going. He was worn out by overwork, and wished only to be carried a few miles into the country. He fell asleep. And then the fancy took me to surprise him, and it appears that I have succeeded in surprising you both."

"There is no doubt about that," said Legouvé.

"None whatever," said Jean. There was silence for a time. Then Legouvé, as though arriving at a sudden decision, said:

"M. Rimbaud, I offer you my profound apologies."

"I accept them," said Jean, "and offer you my equally profound apologies for having gone to sleep. Madame Blancheffleur, monsieur, possesses an extraordinary faculty for surprising people."

"So it would appear," said Legouvé gravely. "And now permit me to refill these glasses."

Again there was silence. It seemed to Madame Blancheffleur that from the immense vacant spaces of the château came echoes of footsteps, voices, sighs. A curious sense of the unreality of the present possessed her. Even Legouvé seemed unreal. She glanced at him, and he held her gaze.

"Your presence, madame, and that of M. Rimbaud in the Château de Milleroy to-night is hardly more surprising than my own. . . . You, madame, came here on a pilgrimage of affection, I on a pilgrimage of farewell." Legouvé's voice was low, controlled, but almost without modulations—an unflexible voice.

"I will be frank with you," he continued. "I know now that I can depend on the absolute discretion of you both. . . . Why, you may ask, should I choose to confide in strangers? I answer that there are times in a man's life when strangers may appear to be his only friends. And to find friends when one expected only solitude——" He paused and sipped his wine very deliberately. Then he took a little circular box from his waistcoat pocket and laid it on the table beside his glass.

"I bought the Château de Milleroy not out of ostentation, but because I had an absurd passion for the place."

"Why absurd?" asked Madame Blancheffleur.

"Because it was admitting romance into my life."

"Is a financier debarred from romance?"

"Not all romance, perhaps, but abstract romance—yes. When he dreams of a past not his own, his present purpose may waver—he may lose grip. . . . I was born, madame, at Beauregard. The Château de Milleroy haunted my childhood. Later, in the struggle for wealth, I sometimes forgot it, but it was always there—the dream. And then, madame, as you said, the dream came true. The Château de

Milleroy—" He paused again, staring into the fire.

"Became yours," Madame Blanchefleur ventured to say.

"On the contrary, it became less mine than before. It continued to haunt me, but in a different way. It weighed upon my spirit. What had I to do—I, who had risen from nothing—with the traditions, the splendours, the tragedies, of the Château de Milleroy? It was as though I had bought for gold a beauty that scorned me, that would not permit itself to be possessed."

Legouvé turned to Rimbaud with a quick gesture.

"Those rumours are true," he said. "I lost my nerve. I might recover my fortune, but to what end? . . . So to-night I came alone to the Château de Milleroy to bid it farewell." He laid his hand upon the little box.

Madame Blanchefleur, who had been watching him with the closest attention, said quietly:

"Monsieur, what does that box contain?"

"I suffer from insomnia, and this, I understand, is a cure."

"I also suffer from insomnia," she said. "Permit me to share your cure." She leant across the table and snatched the box away. Legouvé went white to the lips.

"In Heaven's name—" he cried.

"Ah! . . . Then you were about to take the cure that ends all things?"

Rimbaud, at this moment, could not move: his consciousness had become completely merged in that of the two who faced each other.

"No," said Legouvé, "I was about to return the box to my pocket, as I did once before to-night, when I left you for a moment. I placed it beside me in order to test my strength of will."

"With your permission—" said Madame Blanchefleur, leaning towards the fire with the box raised in her left hand. Legouvé nodded. She tossed the cure amongst the blazing logs.

"I confess," said Legouvé, "that I had thought of taking farewell of the Château de Milleroy in that fashion. But between one's intention and the act something may interpose. In this instance it was Madame Blanchefleur."

"But you said that you were about to return the box to your pocket."

"Precisely. Your interposition, madame, came earlier. I saw you not as *La Fadette*—whom I had seen a hundred times—but as a woman of infinite sympathy. My heart was touched. I was ashamed to be a coward. . . . And then consider—" He looked towards Jean. "Monsieur, do not neglect the wine."

"And then consider," Legouvé repeated, "the situation as it might have affected you!"

"Oh, but I see it!" cried Madame Blanchefleur. "M. Legouvé, the great financier, dies by poison in the Château de Milleroy in the presence of his guests, for whom, clearly, no preparations have been made. Who are those guests? Might it not have been a case of murder? Paris hums, shouts, shrieks with conjectures—"

Legouvé leant forward and tapped on the table with his fingers.

"That, madame, is as it presented itself to me. But enough! . . . I am alive."

Madame Blanchefleur rose.

"You have won a great victory," she said, "but to-night, for the love of Heaven, leave the Château de Milleroy. I do not say for ever, but for to-night. Return to Paris, monsieur. Retrieve your fortune. In ten minutes my car will be ready, and on the return journey I promise you that M. Rimbaud shall keep awake."

A light almost of exultation came into Legouvé's eyes. The fighting instinct blazed up in him again.

"Madame," he cried, "you have saved my life, and by a great stroke I may save my fortune, though for that I care little now. But to silence detractors, to regain power, to astonish the world—that is another matter! But my farewell to the Château de Milleroy is final. I shall abandon the reality and resume the dream."

As Madame Blanchefleur's motor-car passed through the great gates, Legouvé stood up and waved his hand towards the dim mass of the Château de Milleroy.

"I return to the world," he murmured.

"These great ones," said Alphonse to Susanne, as he locked the little door beside the gates, "these great ones are like the wind, now here, now there."

Susanne was trying to hum something to herself.

"That song of Natalie's," she said, "how does it go? It rings in my head. '*La-li-ro-la*.'"

A further story about Madame Blanchefleur will appear in an early number.



" 'You see I've got to go, dear, don't you? I couldn't——' 'No,' she said, very slowly, very softly, 'you couldn't. Take me home, Dick.' "

THE DRUMS

By J. C. HOWARD

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

MINUS his mask, but in skull-cap of jet and in tights of mottled black and yellow, the harlequin climbed to the roof of a taxi-cab, and it was only at the insistence of a perfectly good-humoured policeman that he came down again. Whereupon Agnes Cassanay exercised the rights of a *fiancée* in insisting, from beneath a head-dress like Pharaoh's daughter's, that there was room to spare inside the cab—this despite the occupancy of seven costumed people leaving the Chelsea Arts Ball. Some good-natured soul even surrendered a corner, into which the harlequin collapsed gratefully, and, with the removal of his skull-cap, became Dick Porret.

Agnes Cassanay's left arm may have

crossed his broad shoulder—the long white glove conspicuous behind his close-cropped dark hair—either in ownership or because, in sitting sideways on the knife-edge of room left to her, that attitude was more comfortable. A third reason, at least, was that she was annoyed with Dick Porret, and the voices of six chattering people gave her opportunity.

"I'm surprised at you, Dick. It's not as if you did that kind of thing."

"Tell you the truth," shouted Dick in her ear, "I've astonished myself this evening. But, you see, somehow, as it's my last rag——"

"Your last what?" she yelled back.

"My last rag, perhaps. I meant to tell

you all evening. All evening. Yes. Oh, hang! Wait. We can't talk in this row. Wait, Agnes."

With characteristic impulsiveness he assumed command. Two laughing Alsatian girls and a pierrot wanted to reach Holland Park. They were dropped accordingly. A young Roman and his wife remembered an early Tube. Dick took the remaining shepherdess to Bayswater.

"Ouf!" exclaimed Dick Porret in relief, and opened both windows. "Anywhere!" he yelled to the driver, and threw himself beside Agnes with a grin.

"I'm going to Peru," he announced.

"You haven't been at the champagne, Dick?"

"Not a single bubble of it, Agnes. Honest Injun, I'm going to Peru."

"Dick, it's not true. What for?"

"It's true enough, Agnes. And in a very few days. I'm just wild with delight. The old man only asked me this afternoon."

"The old man? Sir Christopher Rollet? The—eclipse?"

"Yes, you know. Total eclipse and all that. Visible in some odd corner of Peru. You know all about it. Photographs of the spectrum of the red flames, hydrogen, and incandescent magnesium and things. He's taking me."

"Dicky, I'm proud and glad for you."

"I thought you'd take it like that, old girl. I'm a lucky dog to get the chance at twenty-two. I wouldn't have, perhaps, only there's another side to it, Agnes, and I want you to know. I shall be months away, of course. You won't mind that?"

"No-o," said Agnes, the thrum of the taxi like something slipping away.

"Quite so," agreed Dick. "It's dead rotten that way. But it's worth it, Agnes. The point is— Well, you see, the old man sent for me, and I wondered why. He must have missed several men senior to me. And when he offered point-blank to take me, I nearly fainted straight off. Apparently he sent for me deliberately, because he knew my brother, who—er—died out there, you know. Somewhat similar expedition, twelve years ago. I was a kid at the time, and never dreamt that he was there, too. Don't get upset, Agnes; I believe things are quite different now. But, you know, my brother Arthur—"

"Well?"

"He was murdered by savages at his instrument in a lonely station. I didn't know. But Sir Christopher did. Seems he

was one of the men who found him. Says old Arthur must have crawled about for half an hour to let them know he'd saved the photographs, after the brutes had left him. And so," he went on breathlessly, without looking at her blanched face, "old Rollet seemed to think I had some sort of a right to a refusal of this chance. It's— it's quite different nowadays, of course."

The girl sat bolt upright beside him; a tiny strand of honey-gold hair waved oddly in the draught under her head-dress, as the taxi hummed steadily along the Cromwell Road. Quite suddenly she knew she was going to wake in a normal world, where taxis at dawn would be proved unreal, where a voice that aped the tones of Dick Porret, talking of nightmare expeditions, would fade into a housemaid's knock with early tea.

But the single tear that wet the little oval chin made a dark blob upon her gloved hand with a certain actuality, and the humming wheels beneath her had an insistent refrain.

"Quite different nowadays," they said. "Quite different nowadays."

"You're sure of that, Dick?" she managed at last, answering them.

"Why, yes," said he.

"Quite sure, Dick?"

He turned and met her eyes squarely.

"I started being honest," he said slowly, "and I won't hedge. Things are better, Agnes, but it's no picnic. Sir Christopher was most careful to impress on me that I was perfectly free to stay at home. There are to be native police, of course, but, as he says, there were police before, and— Anyhow, Agnes, you see I've got to go, dear, don't you? I couldn't—"

"No," she said, very slowly, very softly, "you couldn't. Take me home, Dick."

He hugged her to him for one breathless half-minute before he jumped to fling an address at the driver. Then he turned to her with glowing and grateful eyes, and talked of his plans. How right he had been to tell her just what was before him! He knew Agnes, and she had not failed him. This was a man's woman, and the mate for a man that he had known her to be even before the testing.

In the greatness of his appreciation of her, he was, perhaps, unaware of just what her answer had cost her, until, as the cab turned a corner by her father's house, he was shocked to find her very quiet and still. So that a little guiltily he got down hurriedly as the taxi stopped, and made a great bustle

of knocking for her. A milkman rattled cans at the corner. A smell of frying bacon floated up from some kitchen area.

Afterwards he was a little surprised at the quick, silent way in which the door opened. At the time he hardly even asked himself why Agnes's father should have been standing, fully dressed, behind it so early.

"Oh—er—come in, Dick," said Colonel Cassanay. He was a tall man, with very grey hair and a handsome, clean-shaven face, that held his daughter's straight nose and the same brown eyes under bushy grey brows.

"I'm so tired, Dad!" cried Agnes, brushing past him. "And a bit—a bit sad, too. I'm going straight to bed, Dad. Dick has news for you. Ask him."

Old Colonel Cassanay started, looked at her queerly as she fled up the stairs. Then he closed the door very gently.

"Come in here, Dick," he said, turning towards the dining-room. "It's a dreadful thing. I haven't realised it yet. And I wanted to tell Agnes myself. How did she hear?"

"Why, I told her myself," said Dick, crossing to warm chilled hands at a red-coal fire.

"You told her yourself?" came the Colonel's voice mechanically behind him. "And how did you know?"

"Why, Sir Christopher Rollet asked me this afternoon."

"Sir Christopher Rollet? What do you mean, boy?"

"Why, if I'd go with him to Peru."

"Good Heavens!" said the Colonel. "Only that? I thought you——"

"What, sir?" gasped Dick, noting for the first time the trembling of a face that suddenly seemed very old.

"Derrick," explained Colonel Cassanay. "Frontier fighting. Upper Burma. Killed."

The boy by the fireplace stared at him in horror—a horror increased twenty-fold as he became violently conscious of his own motley harlequin garb.

But the old man went on steadily: "The wire came late last night, and I went straight to the right quarter, in case they had anything else to tell me. Glad I did. The boy died well. 'Rallying his men with conspicuous gallantry.' The body was recovered." Almost he was smiling, but with tired eyes.

The harlequin was pressing his hand convulsively, in the shy way of Englishmen in grief.

"I'm sorry, sir. I'm sorry," was all he could find to say.

"Thank you, Dick?" said the Colonel, squaring his shoulders. "He was a good boy. With conspicuous gallantry, Dick. One doesn't mean about that sort of thing, Dick, eh? It's—it's a kind of privilege. Just a toll. The price of being men. A toll, that's all. And I've got to tell Agnes."

"I'll go, sir, I think," said Dick helplessly.

"Yes," said the Colonel, "there's Agnes."

II.

COLONEL CASSANAY, a little more stiffly erect than usual, pressed his daughter's arm against his malacca cane as he knocked at the Porrets' door. They were shown upstairs to Mrs. Porret's drawing-room, its windows open upon the Bayswater Road.

That lady, turning a perfectly-levelled head at their entrance, lifted a strong Roman chin one quarter of an inch higher, before, with a quick grace, she crossed to take Cassanay's outstretched hands. There was no need of words.

"You've heard what they say about him?" asked Cassanay simply.

"One gives," said Mrs. Porret.

"Yes," said the Colonel, "one gives. You hear that, Agnes? One gives, and goes on giving."

"I can't," said his daughter, "I can't! Dick must not go. He told me this morning, and I—I said 'Yes.' But I didn't know then. One gives! One gives men like Derrick! What for? It isn't fair. And now they want Dick—my Dick! But I won't let him go! I can't!"

"Agnes," said Colonel Cassanay, "this lady is Dick's mother, loving him in a way that you, perhaps, cannot yet understand. Yet she will tell you, as I do, that the boy must go out where a proud privilege calls him. Let it be at her bidding and yours."

"You wouldn't, Mrs. Porret. You can't. Not now. Think of it! Think of Derrick! Dead! In India! In a skirmish that doesn't matter. Won't even get into the papers. I wouldn't have cared so much if—he had died in France or Gallipoli. That counted. Men had to die. But Derrick went right through that. And we got him home, and the suspense was gone. Even when he went to India I thought he was saved for us. And now——"

Her voice broke, as her golden head nestled upon the broad breast beneath the

Roman face that was under a bowed mass of grey curls.

"Hush, dear!" murmured the elder woman softly.

"Agnes!" cried Colonel Cassanay.

"You don't mean that, dear," came Mrs. Porret's voice. "You see, I love him, too, and I shall send him because—well, because of that. I had another son, his brother. Arthur was about the age Dick is now. We—try to realise it, dear—we give always."

"He can go, of course," she managed.

"And you must send him."

"No, I won't. I never will. It isn't fair. Look!"



"I want you to read this some time," she said, "and give it back to your father when you have read it."

"I won't give Dick, too." The young head flung defiantly backwards within Dick's mother's arms. "I can't hold him, of course, but if he goes——"

She sprang from Dick's mother's side with a wild vehemence and, clinging to the soft wrinkled hand, almost dragged Mrs. Porret before the window. Through the space

below and above the sashes floated the murmur of the crowd in the Park almost opposite—a Saturday afternoon crowd,

before halted omnibuses, taxis hooted in the road beneath them. The air flung up a tang of petrol, hot wood-paving, and



“She’s right, Dick, indeed!”

with a band somewhere beneath the trees, the raised voices of men, the laughter of shop-girls. A black swarm dotted the clearing, crossed and recrossed by the Marble Arch. Compact crowds swarmed

early summer blossoms. A rattling fire-engine went clanging towards deserted shopland.

“Thousands of them,” cried Agnes hoarsely, “and not one cares! *They* never have to give.”

“In a five years’ war?” asked Colonel Cassanay behind them.

"Yes, but——" She stopped suddenly with a sob.

"Is Porret here?" asked Cassanay of the elder lady.

"In his study. Shall I——"

"Yes. The boy's father has a right to his view. And I think I know——"

"If there were fifty of you," cried Agnes desperately, "you couldn't make me say it! And Dick himself, when I ask him, beg him——"

"He is at the Observatory," said Mrs. Porret.

So Porret—Dick's father—joined them, a shrunken man of sixty that must once have been very straight and tall. He wore an old tweed coat, with ragged pockets stuffed with papers. He carried his head oddly on one side, and his eyes were hidden behind heavy spectacles that were darkened a dull blue.

"Cassanay," said he, "you know what I would say to you. Agnes, child, you must be very kind to your father."

"We asked for you," said Cassanay dully, "because we want to know what you think about Dick. You see, my Agnes was quite willing for him to go to Peru with Rollet's expedition until we—we heard about Derrick. And now—well, we're old fogies, Porret; perhaps her point of view is more rational than ours. But, you see, she thinks that she can't spare Dick as well. You're the boy's father. Do you think we ought to keep him? A word from you to Rollet, for example?"

The elder Porret raised his dull eyes uncomprehendingly to the Colonel's. Then they fixed the level look in the proud eyes of his wife. It was across the bent head of Agnes that he understood.

"You wouldn't ask him to stay, Agnes?" he asserted.

"I can't help it. I want him. I need him now."

For a moment Dick's father eyed her in a curious, puzzled way. Then he turned deliberately about and took three shuffling steps doorwards. But Cassanay went before him with outstretched arm.

"Wait, Porret," he said, "and forgive me if I hurt you. You will understand. Agnes, listen to me. Look at this man, Agnes. You see those thick glasses of his? Eyes worn out at a telescope. You see that side-drawn head? Paralysis, following repeated chills in cold watchings of the skies. Twelve years ago he gave one son freely, gladly, as—as I gave Derrick. And

yet he says—he says that Dick also must follow the straight pathway where men go gladly. You can do no less." He was pleading, it seemed, to a stone image, that neither stirred nor answered.

"Besides which," murmured Dick's mother quietly, "there may be no danger whatever. I don't think that a second disaster could be possible when they have the warning of the first to teach them."

"That——" began Colonel Cassanay.

"—has nothing whatever to do with it," completed old Porret. "It is simply a question of a man doing a man's job or shirking it. My boy goes."

Two pairs of keen eyes and the faded ones behind the blue spectacles turned to Agnes standing, looking not at them, but her own height through the open window.

"What do you want me to do?" she asked at length. "Am I to say nothing to keep the man I love from danger—it may be from death?"

"You must do more," said Cassanay. "You must send him with your whole heart."

"I can't do that," said Agnes, "but I'll——"

"Well?" asked Dick's father.

"I'll say no single word to keep him, if he wants to go."

"He would never dream of remaining," asserted Dick's father.

"Even if I——" she began.

"In any case," declared Cassanay.

The girl stared at them all impassively.

"I wonder," she said slowly, "just why you are all so sure."

"You know yourself," said her father.

"Don't you? Don't you? Thank God, you do!"

For Agnes was in old Porret's arms, softly patting with flattened palms his twisted shoulders.

"There, there!" soothed Dick's father.

"We understand. We know, Agnes. But it's for the boy's sake. I wonder if—— Will you wait a moment?" he went on. "Something that may help you, Agnes—help us all. I shan't be a minute."

He went out, dragging his slipped feet. They heard him flip-flop along the corridor and return. He put upon the table a worn leather case, battered and soiled and torn, its sides pitted and stained as if with gunshot that had left black round holes.

"Ants," said Cassanay, pointing.

"Tropical ants, yes," said Porret. "This case was Arthur's." He took out from the

case a number of flat oblong bundles wrapped in brown paper.

"These," said he, "were the original plates that—they're out of date, of course. I got them from Sir Christopher afterwards. But it wasn't that I wanted to show you. I just wanted to read something. Sir Christopher wrote us when they—they found Arthur. Will you listen, Agnes?"

From the settee by the window the girl murmured something that was an assent.

Porret took very tenderly a folded paper and very quietly began to read to them.

It was a letter written by a man who was feeling deeply, a little strained, a thought pompous, but charged with well-meaning—the letter of a man undertaking the hopeless task of comfort to people that were almost strangers.

Terse at the beginning, it spoke of the first expedition to Peru; of the slaughtering of a trusted and tried assistant in the performance of lonely duties; of the desertion of panic-stricken native police; of how they found a devoted youngster lying alone under the stars, beside his smashed telescope and looted baggage. But on a new note it told just how, underneath that still, warm body upon the white sand, there sprawled great capital letters that in his very death agony he had dragged himself backwards and forwards to print legibly and clearly for those that should find him.

"In the scrub," read the enormous letters that with his last living will he traced there, and he had died with both arms outstretched towards the spot in the low bushes where they found, intact and invaluable, the wonderful work for which he had laid down his young life.

And then the letter changed again. It was as if Sir Christopher wrote as much to comfort himself as those to whom he wrote. The voice of Dick's father read steadily, evenly, with a quiet note of pride.

"One can only feel," the letter went, "that to have lived and worked with your son, and (for he was, thank God, but typical) with others like him, was a privilege. He was not even remarkable among the rest of that picked company of young Englishmen. He just seemed an ordinary young fellow who did a man's work among men—better than some, at least as well as any. But I, his chief, upon whom rested the responsibility of knowing him, had ample cause to realise that a certain quiet carelessness of manner in him hid an earnestness deeper than a lesser man's devotion. He would

have smiled awkwardly at the word, I imagine. But it could have been nothing less than devotion that stamped his clean heart with so ungrudging a service, that urged him, under whatever stress of conditions, to the daily performance of what, in a high standard of honourable tradition, he judged a full man's work. Unsatisfied only when called upon to spare himself, generous in the outpouring of his fullest powers and energies in whatever task he found before his hand, the completed work that his last living thought was directed towards preserving forms one more glorious item in that exalting continuity of effort that is our just pride before the silent task-mistress that is our country—a work unfinished, for the furtherance of which he gave his young life gallantly in a last full measure of sacrifice. For that the race breeds such men we can only express an awed thankfulness, and their deaths undying must remain enshrined for ever in the memories of hearts that perhaps, like my own, are too conscious of the greatness of their glory to shed the single tear that might cloud even momentarily the shining purity of their last reward.

Believe me,

In every sympathy,

CHRISTOPHER ROLLET."

It was the voice of Agnes that broke the silence as the reading ended.

"Has Dick seen that letter?" she asked.

"No," said Porret. "He was a boy at the time, and we waited until now to——"

"May I—may I give it to him myself when he comes in?"

With a bow that was as awkward as it was courteous, he placed the letter in her hands.

"He should be here any minute now," remarked Mrs. Porret, at the window. They sat silently.

And in perhaps ten minutes' time Dick Porret, fresh-faced, happy-looking, a strong firm figure in a well-cut lounge suit of darkish grey, stopped short at the drawing-room doorway and looked at them questioningly.

Then he went straight to Agnes.

"It's settled," he told her. "It will be harder for you now, Agnes, since—since this news. But you wouldn't want me to——"

"No," said Agnes. "In fact, I should hate to think you could ever have hesitated."

"You're a good soul, Agnes—a help, you know."

"I want you to read this some time," she said, "and give it back to your father when you have read it. It's about Arthur. I want you to come back, Dick. And I know you will. But in the same case, Dick, I would have you as Arthur was. And so, Dicky, where are your trunks? Can't I help? There must be lots of things. Come on! Show me."

"She's right, Dick, indeed," laughed his mother readily. "He hasn't the least notion of what he wants to take, Agnes, or where to find it. Shall we help him?" And, smiling now, they took Dick with them.

But he was a little puzzled as to why his mother bent and kissed Agnes so tenderly on the stairs.

Beside the window of the drawing-room the elder Porret and Colonel Cassanay stood together.

"He's a lucky lad," said Porret, nodding over his shoulder.

"Yes," said Cassanay, "he'll see bluer skies than we shall again."

"I didn't mean that, although I'd give my right hand only to handle the machines they will give him to control, the young dog."

"And I'd give the same to chunk down from London river to a tropic sea; to feel baking sunshine in the early mornings, with a smell of stable litter in it; to wake in a tent with the hum of a field forge bellows near one's horse-lines, to——"

"Yes," insisted Porret, "but I meant something else. He's lucky to get Agnes."

From the room above came certain odd bumps and thumps, as of cabin trunks. His mother and *his mate* were commencing the packing of Dick Porret, junior astronomical observer in Sir Christopher Rollet's expedition to Peru.

"That wife of yours," said Cassanay.

"And your daughter," said Porret.

"Two good women," said Cassanay.

"Our breed."



DEPARTING.

'E'LL lay me in the cool green shaade,
'Neath th' owld yew tree there s'all I sleep,
An' t' s'il, unwaken'd by mi spaade,
'Ll waarm an' kindly roun' me keep.

An' thrush 'ee will no longer scold
When I been't theer 'ee to behold,
But many's t' day to tell 'ee all
"Ee's asleep! 'Ee's asleep!" 'ee'll j'yf'ly call.

But I s'all 'ear 'ee still, maybe,
When 'ee so call—maybe the while,
Though I be resten' peacefully,
'Appen I, too, s'all 'ear an' smile.

EVERETT HODGE.

THE FATE OF GENIUS

By JOHN RUSSELL

ILLUSTRATED BY HUTTON MITCHELL

SO Abel took the last fond farewell of his violin, placed it tenderly on the table, and made his final preparations.

He removed his coat and vest and folded them neatly over a chair. He sat down in front of the stove and opened the oven door. Then he turned all the gas cocks on and lay back with his head inside the oven, heaving a gusty sigh.

It was a pity, after all. To think what the world was about to lose! A gentle and lofty regret filled him. Not for himself, but for others who would never know what they had missed by the untimely extinction of genius. Poor world! Poor, blind, neglected world!

He sniffled.

He yearned to pass in that moment of exalted sentiment. It would leave upon his face such an ethereal, such a nobly sorrowful expression. He could foresee just how effective that expression would be. He held it, closed his eyes, and waited.

But after a time he opened one of them again, and then the other. Something was wrong. This was not the way people died. He didn't feel a bit like dying. The snuffle changed to a sniff. He sat up suddenly, struck a match, and held it to the burner. Nothing happened. He scrambled to his feet and darted to the meter. The humiliating truth burst upon him.

The gas had run out. It would not come until the requisite coin was placed in the slot. And he stood blocked on the very threshold of his sublime exit by the vulgar lack of a miserable coin!

Indignantly he dived into vest and coat again, snatched his violin from the table, and fled down the dark well of the staircase.

The lowest flight led him to the private inside door of Shinsky's little basement shop.

He stopped on the bottom step and flung a dramatic gesture at the proprietor, who sat there comfortably among his brass trays and copper pots like a bald-headed spider in a gleaming web.

"Shinsky," he cried, "here is my violin! Take it, and a quarter give it to me quick!"

It was tactless—rude, even—but he felt himself a desperate man. His anguish was not lightened when Shinsky shied quite naturally at the abrupt demand.

"Your violin! I should gif a quarter for your violin! Do you think this iss a hock shop?"

Abel saw well enough that he had blundered. The approach had been too sudden. Yet he must have the money, and there was no other immediate hope.

"It is a good violin," he insisted. "One-eighty-nine it cost me."

"If it was good, you would not be selling it for a quarter," returned Shinsky, with unanswerable commercial logic.

"But I need a quarter," wailed Abel.

Shinsky regarded him with disfavour.

"Go out and make it, then. A young feller like you! Long enough you haf been a loafer, living off them cousins of yours upstairs, them poor Lefcozes."

"I am not a loafer!" cried Abel, tossing with a long arm in temperamental vehemence. "I am a musicker. I am a artist—a genius."

"So I haf heard," returned Shinsky drily. "People should pay money to hear you play! Bah! More they would pay if you should not play. It iss like a sick cat. Me, I am telling you the truth. You should get wise to yourself."

Abel restrained himself with a great effort.

"Lend me, then, a quarter," he pleaded.

"The gas is gone out. A quarter I must have it for the slot."

The tinkle of the front-door bell summoned Shinsky to the outer shop. He abolished Abel with a scornful wave.

"I lend no money for good-for-nixes."

He passed around the little partition. Abel sank upon the lowest step in the staircase doorway. Hugging his violin, his despair, and his wrath, he sat there while Shinsky attended to the customer.

Some sordid matter. Some coarse, commonplace affair of commerce. Something to do with a samovar. The customer was a lady, a very expensive lady, already impatient of her visit to this dingy little basement. Shinsky, it appeared, could not please her, even when he reached back into the rear and juggled to view an elaborate specimen all jangling with chains and handles.

"Ten dollars."

She glanced at it without interest and turned away.

"I will look elsewhere."

"Very good, lady," said Shinsky, who had his own pride in his wares. He returned the samovar to its shelf, and glanced around to find Abel Lefcowitz towering above him, pale and terrible, upon the lowest step of the stairway.

"Will you give me that quarter?" demanded Abel again, low-voiced.

"No."

Zam!

The descending violin caught Shinsky right where the skull was shiniest. He went down like a smitten ox and lay still, the A string tautened over the bridge of his nose and his scanty hairs crowned with the shattered sounding board.

The customer had been checked in the very act of opening the front door by a curious crash behind her. There Abel caught her coming on the run.

"Lady," he cried, "you want a samovar? How lucky! Um-m—my, *my*—to think you nearly missed it! I have here the most wonderful, the most beautiful samovar in this country. Come, I should show you."

Abel was young, graceful, amiable. Abel's black eyes glowed with respectful ardour. Abel's whole manner radiated the earnest conviction of the connoisseur and the enthusiast. The customer was caught as in a silken net.

"You have another?"

"Lady, please will you forgive my assistant. He is so stupid. He does not know.

This samovar—this treasure—I have kept it for a special, only for a special customers who understand."

Already he had her away from the door.

"I am only looking," she murmured.

"Of course. Never should I ask you to buy——"

He spurned the idea.

"But my samovar I love to show to appreciators. It is a art piece. If you will wait here——"

He left her in the middle of the shop, slipped around the partition, where he bestrode Shinsky's prostrate form, and reappeared in triumph, bearing a gorgeous article that jangled with chains and handles. He set it down before her impressively.

"Lady, maybe there ain't another like this outside of Russia, maybe not there even. A real antick it is. See the dents—and all copper, pure like money. Beaut'ful. Um-m—my, *my*!"

The customer gazed at the samovar while the dulcet voice of the tempter bourdoned her ear.

"A nobleman from Moscow, y'understand, lady? He brought this here piece with him. For hundreds years it was by his family. Bad luck for him, he had to sell it, and I got it, ain't it? See the nozzle! Never should I part with such a gem, but it is too rich for me. It will soon go. I cannot keep it."

He clapped his hands ecstatically.

"Think of taking tea with such a samovar in the drawing-room! So rich. So refined. So artistic, y'understand, lady? It should go only with mahogany—all soft lights, the chains—only look. All real—solid. It is a real art piece—high art!"

The customer came out of a kind of haze as he ceased speaking.

"And—how much is it?" she murmured hesitantly. There was no haughtiness left in her.

Abel started at the question. He was taken with some inner struggle. Visibly he struggled. Then, with a drawn sigh, he yielded.

"Thirty-five dollars."

When he had closed the door upon the customer, who departed burdened and smiling, he came back to the rear of the shop carrying the money in his hand.

Shinsky was sitting there on the floor, clasping his head and staring up from eyes the size of his own brass platters. He looked highly ridiculous, with the remains of the violin draped about his features. But he was

transfigured by an expression of solemn, of almost holy awe.

"It was—the same—one?"

Abel nodded.

"The same samovar!"

Shinsky was like a man who has witnessed

"Just the quarter I needed," continued Abel. "I wanted only that on the sale. But how could I stop? How *could* I stop with ten-twenty? When I got going I just *got* to make the price fit the case. It is temperament!"



"'A real antick it is. See the dents—and all copper, pure like money.'"

a miracle and questions the testimony of his senses.

Abel indicated the empty place on the shelf.

"And oh, Shinsky," he breathed, "if you only knew how close I come to only charging ten-twenty-five!"

Shinsky shuddered.

"You can keep a quarter," said Shinsky hastily.

In a twofold silence Abel counted over the bills. Then he carefully separated ten dollars from the bunch and handed it into Shinsky's waiting hand. The rest he slid coolly into his vest pocket, while Shinsky sat regarding him with mixed emotions.

"A artist you are, Abel," he said at length. "I see how it is. Never was such a salesman. You are born to success. Listen. I gif you twenty a week and commission. I ask you, would you come with me?"

Abel looked down at the shattered remnants of his violin. Once more he drew a long sigh. His fingers stole back to his pocket and caressed the outline of the little wad of bills.

"Give me change of a dollar, Shinsky," he said. "I want I should have a quarter to work the gas meter."

"What is your hurry for the gas, anyhow?"

"I need a cup of coffee. Will you join me? We will talk over your offer in my cousin's flat."

Shinsky bounced to his feet joyfully.

"Sure! Right away my boy comes back to keep shop. I will be up before you get the water on. You are a smart feller, Abel. Always I knew it."

"My price is twenty-five" said Abel sweetly.

Shinsky grimaced, but nodded.

"Such it iss to be a genius! Here—before you get some more temperament—shake!"

They shook.



"Hugging his violin, his despair, and his wrath."



MERELY FOR INFORMATION.

BOBBY (to spinster aunt at finish of fairy tale) : Auntie, where are all the beautiful maidens nowadays?

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

THE ESCAPE.

By L. A. Pavey.

It was a stupid thing to do, I admit, but I hate people doing inexplicable things or making silly gestures as though they were being quite normal. If you only knew, it irritates me infernally. That's why the shabby man who hung about my path (a ten yards' walk under the clock at Euston Station, waiting for Matthews to turn up for the same train), crossing fingers at me persistently and pathetically, induced me suddenly to cross fingers, too.

He came forward then and, without preamble, delivered himself to this effect: "'E's got away, guv'nor. Couldn't 'elp it, nohow. Old Jack's ill, 'n' sent me. 'Alf-way dahn the 'Arrer Road we was, 'n' 'e nipped away 'n' was lorst before you c'd say 'Knife!'"

His tone was plaintive. This was evidently gross carelessness, and I rebuked it, and then asked carefully what he thought was going to happen now.

"Don't take it too 'ard, guv'nor," he pleaded. "I know you're a friend o' the boss, but it's a

noo job fer me, or it wouldn't 'ave 'appened, 'n' it'll be me ruig, anyway."

"Where do you think he's gone?"

"I can't say—now, guv'nor, 'ow can I? An' I 'ad to leave 'im, seein' as you was waitin' 'ere, 'n' goin' orf so soon."

"If you'd spoken to him properly, he wouldn't have tried it."

"Spoke to 'im! Spoke! 'Ave you tried it?"

"Of course I have. I've always managed him all right." And I added, rather warmly: "I should have thought Jack would have told you all about that."

"Well, straight, guv'nor—*talked* to 'im!" He looked at me appealingly; I had taken the wind out of his sails.

"An' we'd 'ad 'im all right—'ow many weeks was it? Seven?"

"Nearly eight," I said decisively.

"An' it wasn't a good place for 'im, not 'ealthy. It didn't do 'im no good, I know, though where else——"

"You could have put him out," I said tentatively. "A boarding-house, perhaps——"

"A—a—— Well, guv'nor, you *are* a one, you are! Wot would 'e 'a done in a boardin'-ahse? Now, I arks yer. 'Avin' a joke you are, I can see. I'm glad yer kin take it like that, anyway."

"You must call at the station on your way back and make inquiries," I said decisively. "That's our only chance. Then write and let me know. Jack's got my address."

"Station? Me? About 'im? 'Ere, guv'nor, don't pull a chap's leg. W'y, they'd run me in in 'alf a shake! Well, this is a corker, this is!" An overwhelming battle of emotions choked him to silence.

"Well," I said firmly, "if you do get him.

"Lost," it said, "in the Harrow Road, yesterday afternoon, valuable specimen of an unusual South American snake. Quite harmless. Brilliantly coloured. Large reward paid on return or information leading to capture, to——"



"So your husband is an author? How interesting! What subjects does he specialise in?"

"Geography and mathematics."

"Then he writes school books, I suppose?"

"Oh, no—railway time-tables."



ONE REASON.

LADY (to golfer): Will you please take that ball from my dog's mouth? It will ruin his teeth.

send him round on Monday evening. He'll know the way."

The man's jaw fell; he stared at me open-mouthed.

Turning just then, I happened to catch sight of a fat man marching up and down impatiently and blowing out his cheeks. His left hand was carried conspicuously in front of him, and his fingers were crossed.

"You go and tell *him* all about it," I said softly, and went.

* * * * *

The very next morning I caught sight of an advertisement in my paper that told me they had wasted no time.

"ONE never tires of water," says a doctor. We did once when a pipe burst and the plumber dallied.



A MAN has been discovered in Kent who can recite eighty poems straight off. We can only hope that we shall never meet him at an evening-party.



"HULLO, old man! I didn't expect to see you in Town; thought you were wintering abroad."

"Oh, no, I did that last summer."

THE UNMASKING OF JUDKINS.

By E. S. J. Darmady.

At breakfast mother announced her intention of coming to Town with me. She had left a parcel in an omnibus, and wanted my escort to Scotland Yard.

"Don't walk too fast," I said, as we emerged from our garden gate, "or we shall overtake that smug Judkins. He's just ahead."

"I understand young Mr. Judkins is getting on very well," remarked my mother, in a voice that veiled a reproach.

"What makes you think so?" I asked, rather daunted.

"He brings back work with him every evening," answered my mother.

"You mean he brings back a bag with him," I retorted. I knew the look of the bag, smug and rotund like its owner, with an unctuous air that seems to say it is of the best leather, and contains work of the most important character.

"He told your father it was something that kept him occupied the whole evening."

I remained silent, hoping the subject would drop, but mother began again—

"Ernest, do you think it wise to go out so often to dances? Is there no work you can bring home?"

This was the last straw. Dancing is the one accomplishment in which I outshine Judkins. In the Surrey village where we both live he and I are rival bachelors. All summer we face each other at tennis, usually to my discomfort. But when winter comes I get my own back. Judkins is unable to dance. To cover his deficiency, he gave out, I knew, that he was too busy, but I never suspected him of such further duplicity as I was shortly to discover.

"It is important in my profession," I replied

to mother's suggestion, "to go to social functions and make friends."

"I should hardly think your partners were the sort of persons to engage in heavy litigation," said my mother. Women, especially mothers, are so illogical that I said no more, and we reached the station in silence.



QUITS?

WAITER (to grumbling customer): I hope you're quite satisfied now, sir?

CUSTOMER: Satisfied? The vilest dinner I've ever eaten!

WAITER: I didn't mean the dinner, sir. I was referring to the tip you picked up which was left by the previous customer.

At Waterloo Judkins passed out before us. His globose form preceded us down the long slope out of the station. For some reason or other he was not carrying the famous bag.

When we reached the Embankment, he was still trudging in advance.

"It looks almost as if he were going to Scotland Yard, too," observed my mother.

"Surely such a paragon would never leave anything in a train or 'bus," I retorted.

Nevertheless, mother's guess was correct, for when we got inside the department entitled "Left in Vehicle," there was Judkins occupying second place in the queue. Only a young lady was in front of him.

"... between the Hippodrome and Baker Street," she was saying. "How it came to slip

"I have called for a bag," he said. "Here is your postcard."

"Yes," replied the guardian of lost property. "Description?"

"A brown hand-bag," remarked Judkins simply.

I could have given a much better one—a stout, bumptious bag, bulging with self-importance.

"Contents?"

My ears pricked up. Even mother roused herself from trying to recollect the bargains in her lost parcel.



A BETTER DESCRIPTION.

LAND AGENT: This is the plot, sir.

PROSPECTIVE TENANT: Plot! It looks more like a conspiracy.

off my neck I can't think. When my friend and I got out of the taxi, I never missed it."

The large policeman behind the counter regarded her with stolid calm and restored a feather ruffle. His eye caught mine as he did so. To say he winked would be a gross exaggeration. No motion of his eyelid was perceptible, but I would not swear that one of his pupils did not momentarily contract and expand again.

Judkins came next, quite unaware who was behind him.

"Two books," came the answer.

"Titles?" pursued the relentless voice.

For a second Judkins hesitated. Then, with the rush of one anxious to get a thing over, he spluttered out—

"Jazzing Self-Taught and the Gentleman's Manual of Ballroom Conversation."

My eye lit on a box for police orphans that opens its slot to those grateful for recovered possessions.

I promptly dropped in a shilling, a penny, and a halfpenny.

NOT YET.

'Tis not yet time for me to sing
Sweet odes of welcome to the Spring,
Although the weather's mild.
I've done it once or twice, I know,
When suddenly it turned to snow,
And made me feel so wild!

So even when I chance to see
The pure pale primrose on the lea,
The news I will not shout;
For just when we expect it least,
The wind will jump right round to east
And snuff that primrose out.

BLUFFER BLUFFED.

By Frank Piercy.

BLUFFER sat in his private office, occupied with affairs of business too secret and important to be entrusted to any member of his staff. From this sanctum the policy of the firm was directed, and those great advertising schemes launched which drew multitudes of buyers to Bluffer's emporium.

A quiet but firm knock sounded on the door, followed by the entry of a young fellow of three-and-twenty of pushing appearance.

"May I speak with you, sir?" he inquired,

"Certainly. Who are you?" demanded Bluffer in his brusque manner.



AN EASY REVENGE.

FIRST MEMBER OF THE DUDDINGTON GARDEN CITY SOCIAL CLUB: That man Pilkins is insufferable! Something should be done about it.

SECOND MEMBER: I tell you what, let's wait until he's gone to bed, and then go and push his bungalow over.

Misguided swallows may arrive,
And bees be active in their hive;
The wren build in the vine.
And if they like to take the risk,
The silly little lambs may frisk;
It's their affair, not mine.

Though Phyllis walks about all day
In gauzy, summery array,
And sheds her woollen clothes,
There'll come a time, ere many days,
When she reluctantly displays
A chilblain on her nose.

R. H. Roberts.

"I'm Brown, of Mr. Salt's department,"
"Thought I'd seen you somewhere," observed Bluffer. "Well, what do you want?"

"I request permission to marry your daughter," answered Brown, who did not believe in beating about the bush.

"What!" cried his employer, for once completely astounded. "You marry *my* daughter? Rubbish! Which daughter is it you intend to honour my family by accepting?" he asked sarcastically.

"The young pretty one, with blue eyes—Hetty," replied Brown.

"Hetty—Hetty? Oh, I expect you mean Hester," Bluffer suggested.

"Hester is such an ugly name, I *always* call her Hetty," explained the hopeful one.

"Oh, you *always* do, do you? And how often have you met Hetty?"

"Every Sunday morning at church—I regret I have not seen you there often, Mr. Bluffer—and we are in the dramatic society. We are rehearsing 'Romeo and Juliet,' and from acting as lovers we have learned to love sincerely and for ever. We should like to be married without delay," added Brown in a business-like manner.

"Well, if you can spare the time first," said Bluffer, "I should like you to follow my instructions. You will proceed to the wages office immediately, and you will receive two weeks' salary in lieu of notice. Then go downstairs, taking the first turn on the right and the second on the left, and you will arrive at the *employés'* entrance. The commissionaire will then show you out, and if you don't go, I'll throw you out."

"Very good, sir," answered the unperturbed Brown. "But about the wedding——"

There was such a fierce look in Bluffer's eye that he quietly left the room without finishing the sentence.

* * *
"Hello! That Mr. Bluffer? This is Brown speaking."

Bluffer swore and stamped his foot in anger.

"Really, Mr. Bluffer, your language! And over the public telephone, too! I think you forget yourself. There's no need to be annoyed. I've only rung you to tell you that I've decided not to marry your daughter, after all. You see, I don't know her very well yet—in fact, I've never spoken to her. The truth is, that I've received the offer of a better situation if I can start at once, and as your rule of a fortnight's notice made it rather awkward, I had to devise a plan to get the sack. By the way, the two weeks' salary in lieu of notice will be very useful to buy a few things I could not afford on fifty bob a week. Thought I'd better ring you and explain, or you might go home and make a fool of yourself by lecturing Hetty. Well, good-bye. Hope to see you on 'Change some day.'"

This kindly expression was, however, wasted,

for Bluffer had already dropped the 'phone in passion, and was stamping rapidly round and round the office, in imagination enjoying the delights of tearing Brown to pieces.

GLADYS is looking fearfully fed-up to-night."

"Yes, I don't wonder. Her dance partner has just given her a month's notice."

"It's very annoying," said Mrs. Newrich. "My husband is deer-stalking in Scotland, and he has sent home a joint, but cook doesn't



NOTHING ELSE.

SHE: What on earth is the matter with you? You look broken up.

HE: Yes, I've got a cold or something in my head.

SHE: Oh, it must be a cold.

know what to do with it because she can't find 'deer' in the cookery book."

"WHAT do we mean by 'the language of flowers,' Johnnie?"

"Please, miss, it's what father uses when he's tacking up the climbing rose."

FISH, according to a marine botanist, contains a large percentage of alcohol. We have often wondered how fish managed to keep so lively on a beverage of water only.



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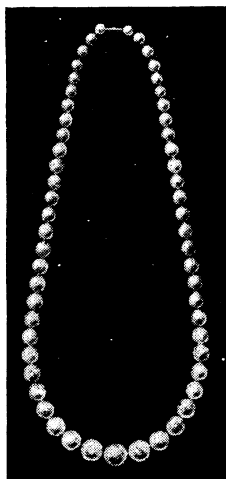


Photo of Ciro Pearl 16-inch Necklet with gold clasp, £1 1s. Other lengths at 1/4 per inch.

NON-SUITED.

By Harold S. Cotter.

BROWN decided a new suit. The family decided it, and their decision was final. After inspection of patterns, the cloth was chosen for him, and he had to confess a weakness for it, as a pattern. When the suit arrived, however, his weak liking turned to strong hate. The thing was too talkative.

His first feeling, when he wore it out, was a curious mixture of timidity and fierceness. He was annoyed when people ignored it, and trembled when their glances came in his direction.

His many sartorial troubles really commenced when he met Spiffkins, who is extremely penurious.

"Hallo, hallo!" he said boisterously. "Have you been doing well with the quadrupeds lately?" Within ten minutes Brown had lived up to his appearance to the tune of ten shillings.

The rest of that day, beyond the usual pleasantries from his colleagues at the office—who professed to have found in Brown the man who posed for Helfridge's ready-to-wear advertisement—passed without incident until the evening. Then our Brummell fell. It was all over in a minute. The 'buses were full, a taxi glided up, and—well, the suit did the rest. Incidentally, the last time he had travelled in a taxi was on his wedding day.

The succeeding occasions when he conquered his repulsion of the thing sufficiently to don it were all marked by some unpleasant occurrence. To have a first-class ticket given you at the booking office when you have not asked for it, and really want a third, is subtle flattery. The booking-clerk spoils the effect, however, when, upon changing it, he made a *sotto voce* remark to an invisible colleague anent the number of Scotsmen now in Town.

Brown realised afterwards that it was a mistake to wear it to the barber's. It was there

discovered that he had dandruff, scurf, was going bald, had sagging skin on his face, needed a dry shampoo and the ends of his hair scorched. True, all the discrepancies were put right before he left, but in his old clothes he never had nor missed these things. Finally Brown met his dentist. That gentleman gave one look, then shook him warmly by the hand. "The old lady died at last? Now, what about a decent set of teeth to make your face match it?"

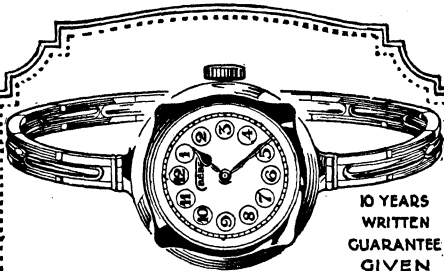


A MATTER OF METHOD.

FOOTPAD: Nah, then, shell out!

PARSON (sadly): If I had such energetic fellows as you to pass the plate now and then, I might have something on me; but, as it is, I'm taking nothing home with me to-night.

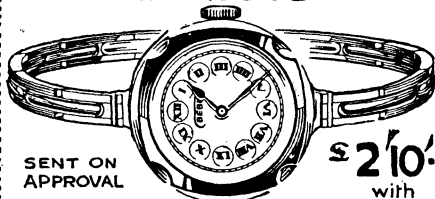
Dentists are plentiful, nobody loves them, and one less would make no difference. Brown resisted the temptation, but decided that the limit had been reached. Some fruit juice spilt down the coat and trousers, a visit to the cleaner's, and the suit left in the train—that was the tale he told the family; but a constable whose beat includes the Thames Embankment could tell a different story.



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improving changes, and every Model is appreciably reduced
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The 1923 improved "Mattamac" is identical in appearance with the
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For Man, Woman, and Child.
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"Matta" Fabric is exceedingly compact.
The Coat worn by the Gt. man beneath,
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This is an actual photograph of his hand and
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19 OUNCES WEIGHT 35/-
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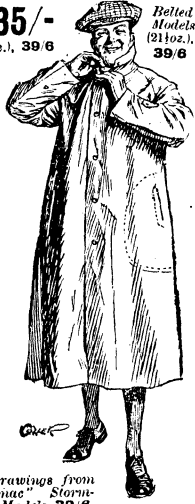
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You buy without risk. Send chest measurement over waistcoat (Ladies
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London, W.1.

NOTHING DOING.

(An expert has been explaining "reciprocal valsing, which necessitates a knowledge of centrifugal action and centres of gravity.")

In an epoch whose motto is "On with the dance!"
It behoves any middle-aged buffer,
Who doesn't like being regarded askance
By partners who suffer,
To glean a few hints from the people who *know*
How to waggle the light and fantastical toe.
In the past with the tango I wrestled for weeks;
In bunnyhugs blissfully snuggled;
With ragtime and jazzing and similar freaks
Undauntedly struggled;
On sensitive corns without number I stepped,
In determined attempts to become an adept.
But "reciprocal valsing" sounds rather involved
For a man who loves peace with his neighbours;

grouping and colour schemes, than someone comes along with a bundle of miscellaneous junk which he doesn't want in his own garden and insists on it going in mine.

I once had a neighbour whose passion for thinning things out amounted to a disease. I dreaded to see him approach the fence, as I always knew what was coming. "I have just been thinning out the beetroots," he would say, or the parsnips, or the brussels sprouts, or whatever it happened to be. "It's a pity to waste them. I'll give them to you." Then he would pass over a bunch of sickly shoots, some of which could hardly be seen with the naked eye, and politely but firmly insist on my planting them at once.



NOT GUILTY!

POLICEMAN (to small boy collecting sticks after gale): Now, then, yer young varmint!
SMALL BOY: Please, sir, it wasn't me that broke the tree down—really!

Its savour of science is—well, I've resolved
To rest from my labours.
The "action," if too centrifugal, would be,
I am firmly convinced, much too giddy for me.

A further (and fatal) objection occurs
To a diffident paterfamilias,
Whose dancing is human and frequently errs—
He would feel a silly ass
Explaining to furious maidens he tripped:
"So sorry, my centre of gravity slipped!"

E. L. Roberts.

But I cured him. One day I thinned out my mustard and cress especially for his benefit, and presented him with a handful, accompanied by the fatal words he had so often addressed to me.



In Africa they have evolved a dog which looks like a lion. What we really want for burglar-scaring purposes is a man-eating tiger which looks like a silkworm.



THE THINNER-OUT.

I DARE SAY people mean well when they present you with their superfluous cuttings and seedlings, but really I wish they wouldn't do it. I no sooner get my herbaceous border planted out with a nice regard for

"I don't mind telling you, my dear, but we keep all our family diamonds at the bank; these I am wearing are only paste."
"Really? They look more like gum."

THE WINDSOR

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"Do you think your mummy would let me have some if I ask her?"

"Of *course* she would—all *real* Mummies use it for their Babies, and we've *got* to be real Mummies now."

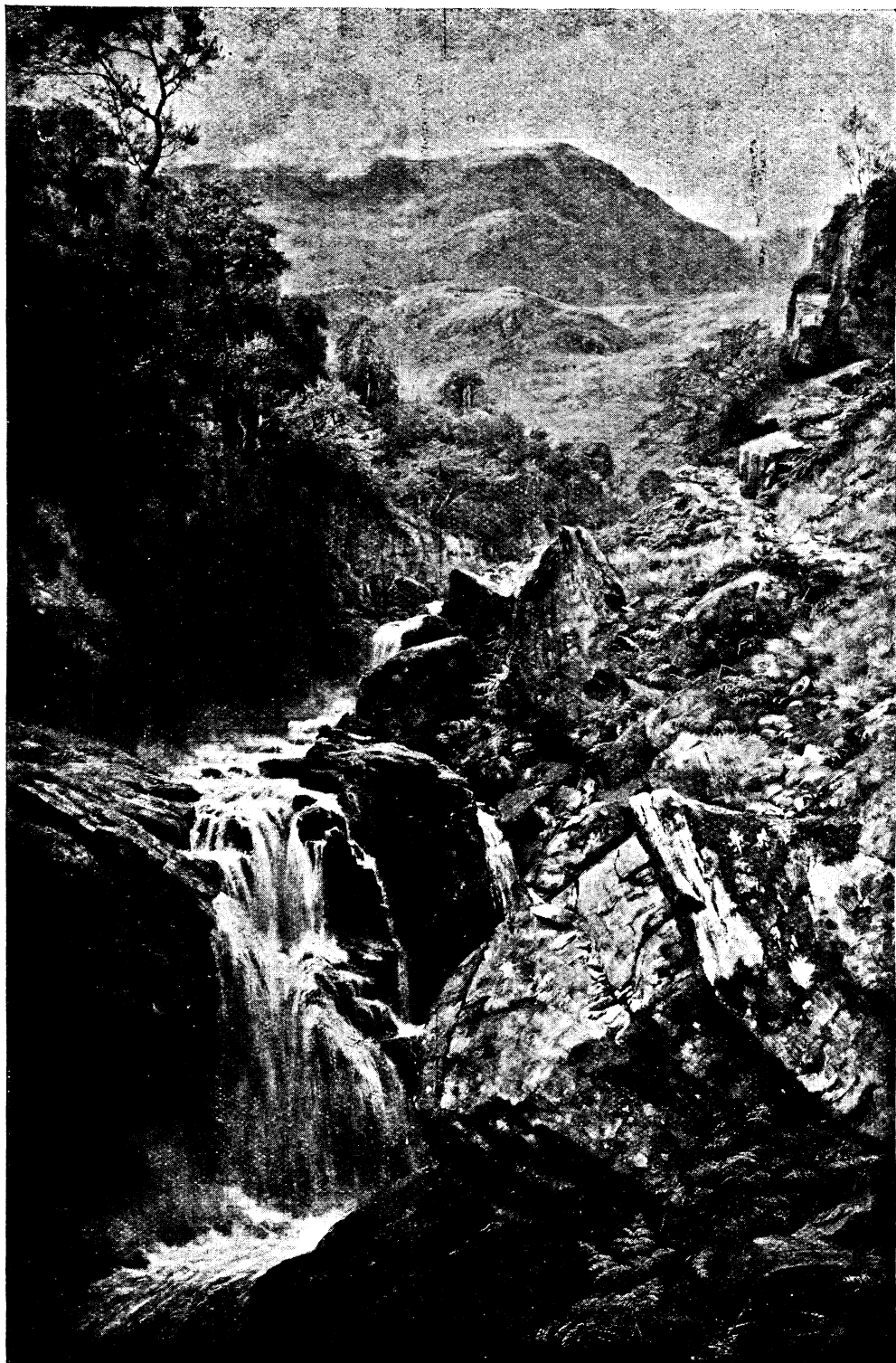
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*The
Nursery
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Use Wrights Lysol

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REDUCED PRICES. 6d. per Tablet. Box of 3 Tabs., 1/6
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A MOUNTAIN GHYLL. BY J. H. CROSSLAND.

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"The King and he . . . crept from bush to bush and dodged the guards."

THE ROYAL VISIT

By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

IT was seven o'clock on an October evening, when the Royal Family of Contendia were rusticated at the royal farm, and the Prince Royal, who was eleven, had just been put to bed. He got out of it, as soon as the bedchamber attendants departed, pulled on a brown dressing-gown, went to the door and listened, with his ear to the keyhole, till their footsteps ceased to be audible. Then he opened the door a little way and, after careful reconnoitring, crept to the stair railings. He further reconnoitred the position from the cover of a settee, and decided that the coast was clear except for the sentry, who would be much easier to elude than a chambermaid. He waited till the sentry was marching away from the staircase, then he carked his leg over the banisters and slid noiselessly down them.

He crouched behind the statue of "some Roman chap" while the sentry walked back and until he turned away again. Then he flitted across the hall. He looked rather like a large bat in the dim light, as he held out his dressing-gown to avoid the risk of tripping over it. He slipped into the royal study and closed the door so quietly that Adolphus IX. did not look up from the royal desk.

He stalked the King in the approved manner of a wild Indian—crept on his hands and knees from the ambush of a sofa to the ambush of an armchair, and from the armchair to the revolving bookcase. He debouched from the bookcase, took the King in the rear, pulled the royal chair round on its swivel, and informed the King that he was a prisoner.

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"If I'd had a gun, I'd have shot you easy, gov!" he stated, getting on the royal knee.

"Your sentry is no good."

"It seems that my son isn't too good, either," the King observed. He stroked the boy's fair hair.

"Seven's too early to go to bed," the Prince Royal explained. "Mother forgets I'm not a baby now. You're going to talk to her about it, you know. What are you doing, dad?"

"Considering a speech," the King told him.

"Do you like writing speeches?"

"No."

"Why don't you make someone write them for you, then?"

"I do. The Prime Minister wrote this for me. I'm just considering it."

"Is it any good?"

"Umph! I might have made it better if a tiresome boy hadn't disturbed me." He stroked the Prince's hair again.

"You don't *really* mind, you know. What's it about, dad?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out. When you're King, my boy, remember that the speeches they write for you generally mean something more than they tell you. You must try to discover what it is. That's the King's puzzle . . . Now, leave those drawers alone!"

"All right, dad. I was only looking . . . I say, it's jolly rotten, being a King or a Prince Royal."

"You get used to it," the King consoled him.

"Well, I don't. I want to go to the circus. There's an elephant, and two camels or dromedaries—I never know which is which—and a monkey, and a bear; and a lady that wears white trousers without any dress over them. You know? Tight things. And a clown, and—lots of 'em! Can't I go?"

"Not this time, I'm afraid, old man. It's only a travelling concern. There's no royal box or—"

"I don't want any royal box," the boy interrupted. "Royal boxes! Ur-r-r! Bowing and scraping, and mustn't make a noise, and got to be dressed up and—er—princely! You know! I don't want to be a prince. I'd rather be a boy!"

"We are what we are," the King pointed out. "Be thankful you weren't born a camel."

"Why, dad?"

"Camels," said the King, "have two stomachs."

His Majesty's digestion was a worry to the court physician and to himself.

"I'd rather like that," the Prince Royal thought, "because—I say, what's this thing in here?"

"You leave the drawers alone. You must go back to bed, my son."

"Yes, but—Didn't *you* ever think you'd like to go to a real circus?"

"You went to—"

"Yes, yes. I mean a proper one, not a special stunt, like they get up for us. A—er—what do they call it?"

"A command performance?"

"That's the thing I *don't* mean. But it sounds like it. I know! A *common* performance. That's it. Didn't you ever want to?"

"I dare say I did," the King owned.

"Go like anybody else, I mean. Not in a royal box. I'd like to sit in a—I don't know what they call it—a place where you can rag!"

"It sounds attractive," the King admitted. "Still, it was a very good performance that you went to last Christmas-time."

"Oh, dad! Why, they left out all the topping bits because they thought mother would disapprove of them! Wasn't she mad? They don't know old mother, do they? If she hadn't been a queen, wouldn't she have laughed at things!"

The King nodded and smiled.

"I expect you get your funny ideas from her," he remarked. He stroked the fair hair once more. "Of course a command performance is—well, a command performance. Still, some of it was very good, you know, especially the conjurer. I *can't* make out how he got the money from those people's pockets. Your mother advised the Minister of Finance to take a few lessons from him. Ha, ha!"

"And did he?" the Prince Royal wanted to know.

"Well, he doesn't seem to be getting the money," the King said ruefully. "Yes, that conjurer was good."

"And the dogs who jumped through the paper hoops," the boy added. "Of course *that* was good. It must be very difficult."

"Very difficult," the King agreed. "I've been trying to get through paper hoops all my life. But you don't know what I mean, eh?"

"They won't let us do things," the boy suggested. "I say, dad"—he whispered in his father's ear—"let's jump through a

hoop to-night. You and me—I mean you and I.”

“Eh?” said the King. “What hoop?”

“Slip out and go to the circus on our own. You see——”

“Good gracious, boy!”

“They don’t half know us here,” the Prince Royal pointed out rapidly. He was swift of tongue, like his royal mother. “We’ve only just come, and haven’t been for two years, and you’ve grown a moustache and beard. And of course I’ve grown up.” He stretched himself and expanded his chest. “Come on, dad! Be a sport!”

The King put his lips in and out several times, smiled a little, stroked his moustache.

“It begins at eight,” the Prince told him. “I’ll go upstairs and dress. I can dodge them all right. This sentry’s no use. You get ready.”

He slipped to the door and opened it a little way.

“I’m afraid——” the King began.

“Ss-ssh!” whispered the boy, with his finger to his lip. “I’ve got to dodge him. It takes some doing, I can tell you! He’s just turning——”

The Prince was gone, and the King found himself addressing his objections to the door. He leaned back in his chair and laughed.

“Well,” he said, “after all, they can’t make a constitutional question of it. But if Adela finds out——” He shook his head. “Well,” he decided, “why should anybody find out? I’ve said that I don’t wish to be disturbed, and she’s settled down to bridge, and won’t leave off till eleven. We’ll just slip out of the window. Lucky I haven’t dressed. Adela—that was the Queen’s name——always says that I look like a farmer in these things. . . . That boy is a young demon—a young demon!”

He nodded approvingly.

The Prince Royal evaded the guards again and regained the royal study unobserved and suitably attired. The King and he climbed out of the window, and crept from bush to bush and dodged the guards. (“I told you they were no use,” the Prince Royal observed.) But they found the lodge-keeper walking up and down outside the lodge, smoking a pipe and humming to himself.

“We’ll have to go further round and climb the railings,” the Prince whispered. “I suppose you can?”

“Ye-es,” the King said; “but I don’t like that barbed wire on the top.”

“Hold it with your handkerchief,” the Prince advised. “And mind the tails of your overcoat. I’ll show you how to do it.”

“Ah!” said the King. (He noted silently that the Prince Royal had jumped through a paper hoop before. Somehow he felt pleased with his son.)

They got over the railings under the shelter of a big tree. The King’s coat-tails *were* a difficulty, but they disentangled them by instalments, and the King got the Prince Royal off a spike.

“Jolly well done, gov!” the Prince complimented him.

“It wasn’t so bad,” said the King. (Somehow he felt pleased with himself.)

“If the sentries were a bit of good,” the Prince Royal remarked, “they’d have shot us. You ought to get some hunters or detectives or Indians—Indians would be best, I think—to train them. But perhaps you don’t want them too good? Eh, dad? Are they to keep you in or to keep other people out?”

“I’ve often wondered,” said the King. “If your mother should hear of this, she—I don’t know what she’d say to us.”

“You never do know what mother will say,” the Prince observed; “but I bet she’d say a jolly lot!”

“How do you manage to pick up your slang?” the King asked.

“Scout round and listen,” the Prince Royal explained, “and—— I say, you aren’t talking as a king, are you? Or a father? Only just—er—talking?”

“Between two gentlemen,” the King said solemnly.

The boy nodded gravely.

“Well, there’s a boy in the stables at the Palace. I give him threepence for a new word.”

“Umph!” said the King. “I hope—speaking as one gentleman to another—you don’t buy many really *bad* words?”

“No-o,” the Prince Royal said sadly, “not *very* many, because—they’re sixpence!”

The King shook his head—indeed, the whole royal body shook!

“That,” he observed, “is extravagance. Sheer extravagance! And encouraging profiteering! You must stick to the three-penny article.”

Some people think that royalties have no sense of humour, but they are mistaken. The Queen nearly had an attack of laughing hysterics when the King told her this conversation.

The King and the Prince Royal walked on until they reached the village, where the great round, lighted tent stood white upon the green. "The Wonder Circus" was spelt in coloured lights above the man who was beating the drum. The Prince Royal felt thirsty. So they entered the village inn, and the King had a mug of beer, and the Prince a glass of ginger ale. He also bought a bag of biscuits and some stale buns for the elephant.

"They say elephants are sensible," he remarked, "but they aren't much judge of tuck."

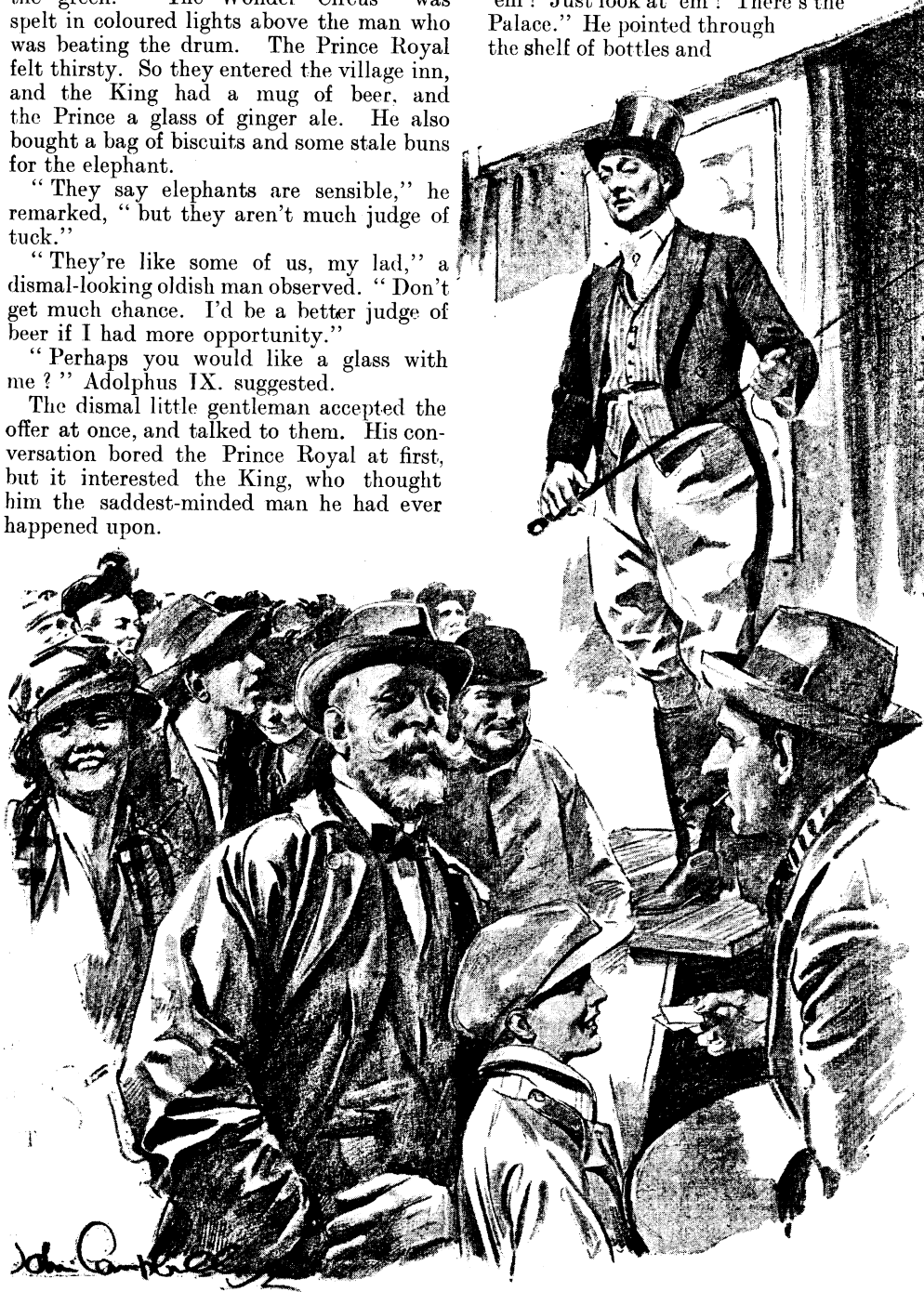
"They're like some of us, my lad," a dismal-looking oldish man observed. "Don't get much chance. I'd be a better judge of beer if I had more opportunity."

"Perhaps you would like a glass with me?" Adolphus IX. suggested.

The dismal little gentleman accepted the offer at once, and talked to them. His conversation bored the Prince Royal at first, but it interested the King, who thought him the saddest-minded man he had ever happened upon.

"You take a gloomy view of things?" he suggested.

"Well," the little man said, "look at 'em! Just look at 'em! There's the Palace." He pointed through the shelf of bottles and



"They went to the pay-desk and found that there were 'boxes' of a sort . . . The King took one,"



"The Wonder Circus."

"Because," the dismal man said, "I'm the clown! Time to go and change, too."

The Prince Royal gasped, and looked at the little man with reverence.

"Would you," he asked timidly, "would you mind shaking hands?"

They shook hands. The clown hurried off to change, and the King and the Prince went on to the pay booth.

"It isn't every prince," the boy told his father, "who has shaken hands with a *clown*—a man who can keep people laughing and smiling!"

"A prince," the King observed half to himself, "should try. Their task is the same, really, son—to make people happier. It is only a difference in methods."

They went to the pay desk and found that there were "boxes" of a sort—three or four places parted off with sail-cloth. The King took one, and he and the Prince Royal entered. The orchestra—a piano, a cornet, and a harp—struck up. The ring-master cracked his whip. The clown tumbled into the arena, smiling his professional smile. A horse rushed in and careered round the ring, with a little girl standing

glass biscuit-jars. "Here's the circus." He pointed through the bar window. "There's the King. Here's the clown. Both got to play on the stage, haven't they?"

"True," said the King thoughtfully. "True!"

"And both got to live, and to live you've got to balance things. Balance things, you see. Laugh one time and cry another, so as to even up. Can't have all work and no play, can you, mister? How do they do it? King pulls a long face on his stage, and laughs off it. Clown laughs on the stage, and has his solemn time off. Can't have it all ways. Ain't enough laugh in a man to do it. A man as laughs by profession won't laugh for amusement. No recreation in it. I tell you what I *know*. . . . Thank you, sir. I don't mind if I do. . . . Yes, I know."

"How do you know?" the Prince asked curiously.

on its back. Another followed, bearing a monkey, who persisted in riding with his face toward the tail. The ring-master kept shifting him round, but he always turned back again. The Prince clapped his hands and screamed with laughter, and shouted.

"It isn't every prince," he told his father, "who gets the chance to yell! I wish you'd—what do they call it, dad?—abbeykate, or something like that?"

"Abdicate," the King suggested.

"That's it. Then we could keep a circus! You could be ring-master, and I'd be the clown, and we could teach Dots"—he meant Her Royal Highness Princess Seraphina—"to jump through hoops. She's jolly quick, if she is a bit tubby. I suppose mother could ride without a saddle, couldn't she? She rides jolly well with one. Isn't she good-looking?"

"Your mother," the King said, "is the handsomest queen that—"

"Oh," cried the Prince Royal, "mother! I didn't mean *her*! I meant—what do they call her?" He consulted the programme. "Diana, the Equestrian Queen. Where's Equestria?"

"Where's your Latin?" the King wanted to know. "It means the queen of horses!"

"Oh-h-h! I thought— Dad, she's going to jump from one horse to the other! Look! See her stand on one foot! Right on the toe! Encore! Encore! . . . There *couldn't* be anybody more wonderful!"

"You haven't seen it all yet," the King reminded him. "You may think the next turn more wonderful still!"

"Never," the Prince Royal declared. "I shall never think that anyone comes up to *her*."

Nevertheless, the fourth turn ousted the Equestrian Queen from the first place in his affections.

"She's all very well for a woman, dad," he said. "But the Educated Pig. Did you see him when I called out 'D'? Put his foot right on it!"

"Ye-es," said the King, with a sudden chuckle. It seemed to him that the pig walked on all the letters, and that the clown picked up the right one as soon as he reached it. Which reminded him of the way that the Prime Minister formed his policy.

"Ripping!" the Prince Royal pronounced. "I had no idea they could do it. Couldn't I have a little pig? I'm sure I could teach it. Here, you listen! The

clown's telling him to bow to the prettiest . . . Oh, it isn't fair! The silly clown keeps getting in front of him. He wants the pig to bow to *him*. . . He won't! Look! He's running away." The clown fell over, grabbing at the pig. "Ha, ha, ha! Serves him right. . . The pig knew, didn't he? Awfully clever, pigs. If you let me have one— What's he doing? . . . Dad, he's bowed to *Diana*. Encore! Encore! . . . Look at him kissing her! He's got sense, that chap. She is the best, you know, next to the pig! . . . If you let me have one, I could keep it in the bathroom, and—"

"Umph!" the King said. "It would be very nice, but you'd better not speak of it for a week or two. It would rather give us away if you began talking about educated pigs."

"Ye-es," the Prince Royal admitted thoughtfully, "it would, rather. We'd better wait a week. You might like to have one, too."

"I think not," said the King.

"Well, I might have two."

"We'll see," the King promised. "If you remember, in a week's time—"

"Father," the Prince Royal protested with emotion, "I know I forget a lot of things—lessons and all that—but I'll never forget the Educated Pig! . . . What is it now? Um-m-m! Only singing! I've had enough of that at the Opera. . . I say, this is better than opera, though. She's better than the lady who made such a noise, and— Dad, it isn't a real woman. It's a man dressed up! Doesn't he take off women all right? Did you hear that? She—I mean he—hasn't left off talking for a second, and directly *her*—I mean his—husband tries to say a word he—she—he says, 'If you'll allow *me* to say a word!' Isn't that like mother? . . . Dad, what does 'squiffy' mean?"

"It's slang," the King told him. "I think it is—er—an objectionable expression for intoxicated."

"Oh!" said the Prince Royal. "Is it a threepenny one or a sixpenny? . . . Shan't encore him. He's all right, but he doesn't come up to the pig, or even Diana. If you let me have that pig—"

"S-sh!" said the King. "Here's the next lot."

Some acrobats came next. The Prince Royal was not greatly struck with them. He thought that his gymnasium master could do better. "There's no fake about *his* stunts, gov," he asserted. "That chap

didn't really go over the chairs, only at the side of them."

However, he was pleased with the lady who played a tune on glasses of water.

"I shall have a go at that myself," he decided. "You tell them to let me have the glasses. I'll teach Dots, too. You'll tell them, won't you?"

"Some day," the King promised, "but if we mention it now, mother would guess that you've been to the circus."

"I don't expect she's ever heard of it," the Prince Royal protested. "If she did, she wouldn't think anything about it. It's a jolly good job you're a man. Mother wouldn't understand that boys and girls want to go to circuses, would she?"

"Ah," said the King, "it's never safe to say that your mother doesn't understand anything."

"No-o," said the Prince Royal. "If she was just a woman, instead of a Queen, she'd be jolly clever. I think . . . Hulloo! What's that old chap going to talk about? What does he mean by 'esteemed patrons,' dad?"

"People who come to the circus," the King explained. "He's saying—Eh?"

The King stared, and if he had not been a king, his mouth would have opened with astonishment. For the circus proprietor said this:—

"My Esteemed Patrons,—Those who have done us the honour to patronise this humble establishment to-night—I say 'humble,' but I venture to add unequalled of its kind—will be glad to know that, in a sense, we are favoured with a royal visit."

"I'm—er—sixpen'orthed!" the King muttered.

"Done in!" the Prince murmured.

"In a sense," the proprietor repeated, "we are favoured by the presence of royalty."

The King grasped the rough wooden rail, covered with bunting, which partitioned him off from the arena. The Prince grasped his father's leg.

"Someone spotted us!" he whispered. "I expect it was the Educated Pig."

"A Royal Personage," the proprietor continued, "beloved through the length and breadth of this land—throughout which, I may say in passing, the Wonder Circus has given instructive amusement to thousands—this gracious royal personage is present among us"—the King groaned—"in spirit." The King looked puzzled. "In other words, the—er—exalted royal per-

sonage, hearing of our famous entertainment, and realising with royal—er—wisdom the manner in which it appeals to the young—"

"You tell mother that!" the Prince whispered.

"—as also," the proprietor observed, "I am glad to see that it does to those of—er—riper years, this noble and exalted sovereign has—er—paid from the royal privy purse for a number of seats, and—er—not to mince matters, you will notice that block C is occupied by the children of the Orphans' Home. Ladies and gentlemen, those seats were provided by our most Gracious Queen!"

The audience rose and cheered uproariously. No one was more uproarious than the Prince Royal, unless it was the King.

"Your mother," he told his son, "is a most wonderful woman! A *wonderful* woman! Do you know, if I told her about this, I—upon my word I almost think she'd understand."

"I wish she'd seen the Educated Pig," the Prince Royal murmured, "then perhaps she'd let me have one. You see, she's nearly used to the white mice now. She won't touch them, but—Dad, look at the monkey!"

The monkey did tricks, and the clown tried to copy them and couldn't. So he got angry with the monkey, and the monkey got angry with him. At last the monkey dressed up as a clown and mocked the proper one; and the clown got very angry and chased the monkey; and the monkey got very angry and chased the clown, who ran away. They told the monkey that his turn was over, but he wouldn't go, and finally the ring-master carried him out.

The Prince laughed till the tears ran down his face.

"I don't think I want a pig," he decided. "I don't believe you can educate them, unless they're special ones. Can I have a monkey?"

He stuck to the monkey right up to the end of the performance, though Sam, the Sagacious Spaniel, made him waver.

"Of course," he said, as they walked home, "a dog is cleverer, but a monkey is more uncommon. That's where it is, dad. . . . I think a dog is cleverer than anybody understands—even you, or mother."

"It is never safe," the King observed, "to say that your mother doesn't understand *anything*. Look how she understood

that those children would be longing to go to the circus!"

"Ye-es," said the Prince Royal, "but she didn't understand about *me*. *You* did." He slipped his arm through his father's. "Circuses make you jolly sleepy," he said. "Perhaps that was why she didn't think I'd better go. Eh?"

"Yes," the King said, "I expect that's what your mother thought. I don't know, I don't know. Perhaps we shall find out some day."

The King found out what the Queen thought, after they had dodged the guards and got safely in, and he had put the Prince Royal to bed. She came in just as he was tucking him in, and revised the tucking, as mothers always do.

"I found you'd left the study," she remarked to the King, "and I thought you might be here. Good night, old son. Do you know one of your mice got out? Clementina, I think it was. She ran into the drawing-room and——"

"Mother"—the Prince sat up in bed—"it isn't—isn't hurt or lost?"

"No, no, dear. It's safe back in its cage."

"Who put it back?" he asked.

"I did," the Queen told him.

"What!" the boy cried. "You? I say, you used to be in such a funk of them!"

The Queen laughed, gave a little shiver.

"I was," she owned. "But you'd have made such a fuss if Clementina had been lost, so I picked her up. You should have heard Lady Honoria scream!"

"I wish I had!" the Prince Royal said

regretfully. "You're a jolly good sport, mother. I—I—think, now you've got to understand white mice, you'd soon get used to a m-mon——"

He fell suddenly asleep.

"To *what*?" the Queen asked.

"He wants a monkey," the King explained. "Boys are—boys."

"So are men," said the Queen, "sometimes! I came to look at you both, and when I found you'd *both* gone—I guessed. Dol"—that was what she called the King—"we must let one of the maids take 'Dots' on the quiet to-morrow night. Girls are—boys—too! . . . What did you see and hear?"

"I heard," the King said, "of a gracious Queen, who is beloved through the length and breadth of this land, and I'm hanged if anyone thinks more of her than her husband does, Adela!"

"Do you know," the Queen remarked, "I always had a fancy to see a *real* circus—not a revised version specially for us. They mightn't alter it very much if we went to-morrow?"

"Umph!" said the King. "I don't know that the man who dresses up as a woman is—er—quite suitable for you to hear, my dear."

"That," said the Queen, "is exactly why I want to hear him."

So the Wonder Circus now heads its bills with the royal arms, and its programmes with a large notice in very black print—

Exactly as performed before the Royal Family on the occasion of Their Majesties' gracious visit.

GREETINGS FROM THE ABSENT:

AN ECHO ACROSS FIFTEEN CENTURIES.

Translated from Palladas, Greek Anthology, ix. 401

NATURE, the pain of sundered friends to ease,
 Presence in absence by her gift achieves:
 Pen, ink and paper, with hand-writing—these
 Sure tokens of the severed heart that grieves.

J. S. PHILLPOTTS.



PLAYING FOR A PULL.

The head of the club is slightly "shut face," as a natural result of stance and the pull intention. The player is not thinking of how the club-head lies across his shoulder, only of making the shot.

THE ROAD TO SCRATCH GOLF

By SANDY HERD

*In a chat with Clyde Foster, illustrated from action-photographs of Sandy Herd by
"The Daily Mail."*

NUMBERS of golfers, by letter and word of mouth, have told me that they profited by my article in *THE WINDSOR MAGAZINE* entitled "How to Golf and How Not to Golf."

One writes: "I begin to see visions of getting down to scratch. My handicap is eight, and I was becoming anxious about living up to it, when your clear and simple directions enabled me to play to a four handicap on two or three occasions since.

Now, Sandy, why not tell me and others how to get down to scratch, or near it?"

So be it. Let the subject of this article be "The Road to Scratch Golf"—a long, smooth road if you keep straight, but rougher than the road to Dublin off the path.

In the first place, you must know what you are doing, especially when you are doing wrong. Even the most mechanical player—and all professionals are supposed

to play mechanically—will go off at times, but his knowledge of the game quickly enables him to rectify faults that have crept into his play.

He does not make the pathetic appeal to his partner or caddie: "What am I doing wrong?" He knows. The Americans call across to the man who makes a brilliant shot: "What d'y'e *know*?"

The trouble is to put oneself right immediately, as there is little enough time to spare in a match. One may find that things do not come right as easily as they go wrong. But the skilled mechanic knows his machine, and carries a bag of tools with which to make all the necessary repairs. The golfer's "kit" is his knowledge.

Now, an eight handicap is not a low one. I have heard of a cricketer who started golf on a single-figure mark. His progress was so fast that the handicapping committee could not keep pace with him. He came to a halt at plus something or other.

Cricket is an aid to golf only in so far as it strengthens the wrists and forearms, while it keeps spots out of a young man's eyes, where there should never be any spots.

Eighty per cent. of golf is timing, and eighty per cent. of golfers underrate its importance. Only timing makes the other twenty per cent. what they are. It is timing that gives the click to their shots and enables a lightweight to drive as far as a heavyweight—or almost as far, and certainly far enough, for great length has its dangers as well as its thrills.

Mitchell is the straightest long-driver in the world. The Americans say so, too. But James Sherlock would beat him sometimes, for Sherlock's timing is perfect.

It must be obvious to everyone that there are degrees of timing. We all hit the ball at some "time" or other, but too often at the wrong time. A hundred golfers might differ in their styles, but the one among them who times his shots best is king. The care taken with timing is the best possible regulator of temperament—the bogey we hear so much about nowadays.

As is well known, I am the most elaborate "waggler" in professional golf. Timing is what I am after with five or six waggles for wooden shots and three or four waggles for iron and mashie shots. I hang back and will not let the shot go until I feel sure it is going to go right.

In America recently I lost my waggle, and was as helpless as a sheep on its back. I could not find my feet.



A NATURAL AND COMFORTABLE PUTTING POSITION.

I suppose this was owing to the fagging effects of the great heat. The Americans were disappointed to find my waggle down to normal proportions. My golf suffered in consequence, and I had been back in England two months before the waggling habit of a lifetime returned, to my great relief. My timing became all right immediately.

"But," you ask, "how is this timing acquired?" I am asking that question for you because it is the question I wish you to ask.

The great enemy of timing with any club is hurry. The only way to time a golf shot is to take your time—time yourself, so to speak.

Whatever faults you have, I have, too, but probably not to such a degree. Some days, strive as I may, my driving is twenty yards short of what I know myself to be

capable of. I commence making the same mistake as the eight-handicap man and other strugglers. I break my neck trying to hit the ball harder to reach the needed distance. That is the surest way not to get it.

I then talk to myself, and arrive at the sound conclusion that this ill-timed pressing only makes matters worse. Golf cannot be played in a hurry. There is only one George Duncan, and although the Aberdonian wizard seems to be in a hurry, the fact is that Duncan thinks and moves quicker than other people.

Of course you need not be as slow as the hands of a clock in your deliberation. All I am driving at is that time should be taken to bring the wrists into position at the top of the swing, so that the club-head shall flash down and through without any hitching, quickening as it goes.

Wait, and again I say wait, for the wrists

to fall into a striking position before you commence the downward part of the swing. Don't be afraid to pause for the fraction of a second, and, above all, don't throw the club out of its proper arc by losing your balance at the start of the downward swing.

Whether you are making a half swing, three-quarter, or full swing, on no account come down in a flutter, but with a steady smooth sweep that gathers pace gradually. Everything will then turn out well. The ball will be hit in the clean manner which makes all the difference in golf—the kind of shot that rings a peal of bells in the brain and sets the blood tingling.

There is, however, a danger to be guarded against here. Beware of jerking at the moment of impact, or about a foot from the ball, in order to increase the speed of the club at this point. That is not how this should be accomplished: the highest speed of the downward swing ought to come at the bottom as naturally as a falling stone strikes the ground at its fastest pace. Don't try to shove the club-head through as if the joints in your elbows and wrists might just as well not be there. Your arms are not built on pump-handle or ramrod models. Flick the club-head through, or "breeze" it through, or "whistle" it through, but as you want to improve your golf, don't "heave" it through.

The swinging of a hammer seems easy to anybody, but try it against a practised hand, and you will discover that the art of timing is in that, too. The skilled workman lets the hammer-head do its work. The skilled golfer pays the same respect to the club-head. If the hands get in front in either case, or the blow is hurriedly and flurriedly delivered, the nail will be missed or driven askew, and the golf shot botched.

Now I come to skate on thin ice, by advising ambitious golfers to play as much as possible with men a little better than themselves—not too much better, as overwhelming company might induce pressing with discouraging results. It is always desirable to advance by slow stages, not by fits and starts. The golfer is not progressing satisfactorily



HERD'S "2-V'S" GRIP.

Notice how steadily he holds with the thumb and forefinger of the right hand: the same is the case with the hidden thumb and forefinger of the left hand.

whose play is described as "uneven," like a patchwork quilt.

To take one stroke off your handicap per month would be excellent progress—rapid progress, in fact, if it is continuous. It will soon be hard enough to live up to, or down to, scratch, when the joy is lost of seeing one's game growing better and better day by day. Enough that it grows no worse. Such is the penalty of greatness.



A WORKMANLIKE ADDRESS FOR THE DRIVE.

The poise here is perfect for the blending of timing and power. One can imagine the right shoulder coming through finely when the moment arrives.

You will be spoken of as a selfish fellow when clubmates discover that you are always on the look-out for superior opponents. Should the lower handicap players be actuated by the same ambition, that will be your misfortune. But, as a rule, really good golfers, with firmly-established form, are not averse from playing occasionally

with men to whom they must give a stroke or two. A rank duffer is not ripe for such company yet.

Be sure to study your possibilities and limitations thoroughly. Don't flatter yourself. Two men may differ widely in driving power who yet play off the same mark and beat each other alternately. He is not the best cricketer who makes great swipes into the face of the pavilion clock; it is the scientific batsman who heads the averages.

The craze for long driving makes thousands of golfers mourn as their handicaps remain stationary, with a tendency to go up rather than down. Let them play golf, clean golf—short or long, but golf all the time—and advancement is inevitable.

There is no other road to scratch but knowing how to play and persistently putting your knowledge into practice. A month or two of close observance of this law saves years of time.

A young man who is spoken of as having the makings of a fine golfer ought to form good habits—in other words, he should lay foundations on which he can develop his golf in years to come, leaving little or nothing to be unlearned.

It is well to pick out some professional as a model, and not to mix your models by imitating Tom, Dick, and Harry, and acquiring a sort of miscellaneous style.

When I take on a promising pupil I do not insist on his copying my grip, which neither overlaps nor interlocks, and is usually spoken of as the "2-V's" grip. Ben Sayers calls it the "sausage grip." After the championship at Deal, in which I finished second to Duncan, Ben sent me a telegram saying: "Well done, the sausage grip!" The grip matters so little that I pay scant heed to it, beyond casually hinting at the dangers of losing power by laying the right hand too far over the shaft.

Fair-weather golfers often come sadly to grief in cross winds, which handicap them instead of helping them. As you are not near enough to take the niblick to me, I should say they get the "wind up" then. They cannot use the wind, and that is a serious drawback at such a breezy game as golf.

For my part, I should shake hands with myself on finding a cross wind blowing at a championship—like St. Andrews, where golf is played in conditions well described in Burns's lines "a' the airts the wind can blaw."

When playing at Coombe Hill lately, in



HERD ADDRESSING THE BALL FOR THE SPOON SHOT OF WHICH HE IS THE ACKNOWLEDGED MASTER.

Herd does not hesitate to take a spoon where others take irons, if, as he says, he is "in the mood for it."

the company of Captain Ernest Carter, Mr. Stoner Crowther, and J. H. Taylor—the day I holed in one for the seventeenth time—I played a pull shot round the wind, and overheard Taylor say to the others: "Sandy Herd's the only man I ever knew who can do that shot when he wants to." If Taylor pays you a compliment, you tell your friends about it, as I am doing now.

I should like to show you how to play that shot, for its usefulness is very great. The wind is not to be trusted; it must be mastered and it can be mastered. At St. Andrews it is nearly always blowing left to right across the course, and we boys had to get the upper hand of the wind to prevent the balls from scampering madly over the fairways and greens.

There must be no ballooning of the "round the wind" shot. The ball should be kept low, tugging all the way at the wind's wings, so to speak. It is dangerous to play to the left, hoping that the wind will bring the ball into the straight or lay it nicely on the green. Once in ten times this may happen, but on the other nine occasions there will be disaster; sometimes, too, your ball will get behind the wind and turn away further to the left.

The right thing to do, with whatever club you are using, is to go out a little and then



HITTING THE BALL.

Herd is not addressing the ball in this photograph. The club-head is seen at the foot of the downward swing just before the moment of impact. The right knee is beginning to bend for the follow through. An inch further and the club-head will have straightened.



Photo by]

[Sport & General.

THE QUARTER SWING.

Where the wrists start to bend.

draw in against the wind. Many times my ball has been out of bounds in the air at this shot, baffling the attempts of the wind to blow it farther out.

Should you be approaching to the green, or playing a one-shot hole, the ball that has travelled as indicated will drop almost motionless on the green, let down by the wind it has beaten. There is no more fascinating shot in all golf than that of causing the ball to swerve into a cross wind.

It is the turning of the wrists and the right hip in unison at the moment of impact that accomplishes the shot. The risks are considerable at first, but when the shot is mastered, it has a wonderful steadying effect in boisterous weather. You no longer feel at the wind's mercy.

Now let me tell you where players go wrong with this pull shot, as I want to clear everything up for you. They overdo the pull, wheeling themselves round in striking the ball. The pull comes on far too soon, and is a disappointing failure. Pulling a golf ball is not like catching butterflies with a net or cutting grass with a scythe.

I take up my stance a little more in front, with the ball nearer my right than

my left foot. My tee shot goes straight for 180 or 190 yards, and then—perhaps to my opponent's astonishment, but not to mine—gradually wheels inwards to the left.

The pull-spin begins to show itself as the ball tires. All I do is to keep the idea of the pull in mind, and give the right hand a slight turn inwards at the moment of striking. Nothing more is required. Convince yourself of this, and you will have made the acquaintance of another of those little things that matter so much in the game of golf. Be on your guard against exaggerating.

Harry Vardon and I were one day chipping each other about this favourite shot of mine. He said: "What is the good of pulling a ball if you can go straight without it?" That was in his superman days, when Harry could do anything. Braid was then the longest driver among us all, but Vardon's carries, wind or no wind, were probably longer than his.

Mr. Harold H. Hilton, who beat the whole field of professionals in two open championships, owed his position, I think, to his mastery of the pull shot. He never had anything to learn from me. No golfer has had more shots in his bag than Mr. Hilton at his best.

Perhaps the shot that will bring your handicap down quicker than any other is the cut shot with the mashie up to the pin, leaving a single putt "missable," but "on."

The popular idea is to saw across the ball from right to left. A better thing to do is to take the club back with the left arm rigid and hit under the ball with the left arm still rigid and the back of the left hand facing the flag. Under-spin will thus be imparted, and the ball should pull up within a few feet of where it falls.

The bunker shot requires careful consideration, and the position of the ball should be thoroughly examined. If it lies half buried, it must be exploded out by striking the sand with the niblick an inch or two behind the ball. The club should be lifted very straight up with the left arm, and the head shoved as far as possible under the ball with a sort of sub-sand follow through. The ball will then dart into the air with surprisingly satisfactory results.

The best of all bunker shots is the one that keeps out of the bunker. Think of the effect on your score if a round is completed without a bunker being once visited! The Americans say of bunkers: "No road

this way." They dodge them whenever possible. Guides, not traps, they call them.

And now we come to concentration, which the few are born with, and the majority must lay hold of somehow, for without it good golf is impossible. I am not thinking of grim concentration that stiffens the muscles and makes a man pull a fearsome face.

Why is it that you go round in bogey, or nearly, one day, and take ten or a dozen more strokes another? Why do men say at one time, "I could do nothing wrong," and at another time, "I could do nothing right, could not hit a ball, played like a beginner," and so forth?

As a rule, the explanation is lack of concentration, and the remedy is in one's own hands. Accidents will happen, of course, but I am talking of errors of judgment, or bad shots, due to some form of "swithering"—playing in two minds, or perhaps with the mind a blank. Golf will have none of this. Single-figure players eager to "come down" cannot over-emphasise the importance of concentration, without which there can be no timing and nothing but wreckage.

Golf deserves all your attention while playing. Probably nine-tenths of your troubles are curable by concentration. Have you never known what it is to beat yourself? I have, alas! too often.

An old caddie, now no longer to the fore, used to say that it needed a "sheep's head" to play golf. He came to this conclusion through seeing sheep grazing on the course, regardless of balls cracking about their



A CLEAN DRIVE DOWN THE MIDDLE OF THE FAIRWAY.

The club-head at the top of the swing shows the "open face," as the player is concerned only with a long clean shot. "No tricks here."

heads, often going on grazing after a knock as if nothing had happened.

"A deer's head's no good," the old caddie argued, "because the chirping of a grasshopper or the call of the cuckoo would mak' a deer lift its head. All champion golfers belong to the sheep's head class."

Though it is hardly a compliment to be likened to a sheep, still, in the sense here meant, the composure of old "Maisie" is worth having. When the mind wanders the ball wanders.





A SCARF OF YELLOW

I HAVE a scarf of yellow,
I have a gown of blue,
And when the year's more mellow,
I shall dance the woodland through;
The sun will start a-gilding
The reaches of the sky,
And the birds will leave their building
Just to see me dancing by.

I'll dance the wood's dominion,
The first tree to the last,
And the folk will hold opinion
That the sun went dancing past;
I'll tread the bracken under,
The trees will twist awry,
And the squirrels leave their plunder
Just to see me dancing by.

I have a scarf of yellow,
I have a gown of blue,
And when the year's more mellow,
I shall dance the woodland through;
The wind will try to follow,
The buds will peek and pry,
And new leaves will deck the hollow
Just to see me dancing by.

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.

VALERIE FRENCH

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "Anthony Lyveden," "Berry and Co.," "Jonah and Co.,"
"The Brother of Daphne," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS.—The great woodland estate of Gramarye, in the Cotswolds, was on fire, but when the news spread nobody cared, for the house was tumbling down, the park was deserted, and their owner, Colonel Winchester, was in a madhouse, to which local opinion held that he had been driven by some malign influence in this wilderness of a property. The mental breakdown of Anthony Lyveden while working for him was ascribed to the same cause. From a spur of the Cotswolds a man looked down upon the holocaust, but cared no more than anyone else, for he had lost his memory. Sitting at his feet was a small rough-haired dog for whose presence he could not account, and both were in the last stage of exhaustion when found, struggling on their way in search of food, by two privates of the R.A.S.C., in charge of a motor lorry, who sheltered and befriended them and gave them a lift to the next village. There the kindly landlord of an inn gave them hospitality, assuring Anthony Lyveden that he need not pay anything until able to do so. After bestowing upon himself and the Sealyham the names of "Jonathan" and "Hamlet," in his inability to remember even his own name, Anthony Lyveden set forth to seek his fortune. About this time Lady Touchstone wrote to her kinsman, Cardinal Forest, "Poor Anthony Lyveden's body was found a fortnight ago. We had him buried at Girdle," but, being on the Continent, she had not yet heard of the burning of Gramarye, and was referring to the search for Anthony, who had disappeared, and to the discovery of a dead body assumed to be his. She had gone abroad with her grief-stricken niece, Valerie French, who had been engaged to be married to Anthony, and at Dinard they made the acquaintance of an English girl, André Strongitharm—the *fiancée* of Colonel Winchester—who gave Valerie a profoundly moving account of Anthony's life and work at Gramarye, and of the baleful influence of the place upon his brain. A day later André was recalled to England by the news of Colonel Winchester's sudden recovery. Meantime Anthony Lyveden and his dog fell in with Sir Andrew Plague, K.C., upon the Oxford Road, and by this chance encounter Anthony made for himself a friend indeed. Rough and hot-tempered, but kindly, the famous lawyer took a liking to "Jonathan Wood," and, when he learned that, having lost all memory of his own identity, he was beginning life again, engaged him as his secretary. André had been deeply in love with Anthony, but without awakening any response from him; now, however, that he was apparently dead, she determined to try to forget the matter and devote herself to her *fiancé*, Richard Winchester. At the latter's first meeting with her new friend, Valerie, he astounded the two girls by casually remarking that from a cab in Fleet Street he had just seen Anthony Lyveden, only to lose him again among the byways of the Temple. To the answer, "But he's dead! He's buried at Girdle," Winchester replied, "Nonsense! I'd know him anywhere. Besides, he had his dog with him—a Sealyham, with a big, black patch on his back." Inquiries were at once set on foot, and Winchester himself conducted a house-to-house investigation of the Temple, but all in vain, until a chance acquaintanceship with Lady Touchstone led to Sir Andrew's recognition of a photograph of Anthony in her drawing-room. Even then conversational cross-purposes prevented Lady Touchstone's understanding the lawyer's allusions to the portrait, and it was only after his departure that Valerie, on hearing of the conversation, rang up Sir Andrew's number on the telephone and asked: "Is that Sir Andrew Plague's?" "It is," replied Anthony Lyveden.

V. FALLACY ROW.

"ANTHONY! Anthony!"
Anthony Lyveden swallowed.
Then—

"This is Sir Andrew Plague's," he said, speaking distinctly.

"Anthony! Don't you know me?" cried the voice.

The man frowned into the mouthpiece.

"I think you're making a mistake," he said quietly. "This is Sir An——"

"I know! I know!"

Anthony raised his eyebrows.

"Who is that speaking?" he said.

"It's me, Anthony. Me—Valerie!"

With an air of amused vexation, the man

held off the receiver. After a moment he replaced it against his ear.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said, "but I assure you you're making a mistake. This is Sir Andrew Plague's, and I'm his secretary. Can I——"

"It's Valerie, Anthony. VALERIE—Valerie French."

The man took a deep breath.

"Could you—would you mind telling me what you want?" he said desperately.

"Sir Andrew himself is out, but——"

"Isn't that Anthony Lyveden?"

"No," cried the man, "no."

"Then who is it?"

"It's . . ."

The sentence died there and then.

For a second of time the man stared at the telephone with a dropped jaw. . . .

Then he clapped his palm to the mouth-piece and set the receiver down.

"It's come," he whispered. "It's come. My God, it's come!"

He began to tremble.

For a moment he sat, shaking. Then he rose to his feet and stepped to the bell. . . .

A servant appeared.

"Answer the telephone," said the man. "Say I've been called away, and ask for the lady's telephone number and—and name."

The fellow took the receiver and picked up a pencil.

"Hullo?"

"Who's that?" flashed Valerie.

"May I have your number, m'm? The gentleman you were speakin' to has bin called away, m'm."

There was a long silence.

"Hullo?" said the servant, straining his ears. "Hullo, hullo?"

"Mayfair eight nine double nine," said Valerie slowly.

"Mayfair eight nine double nine," repeated the servant, writing. "An', if you please, m'm, your name."

"Miss Valerie French."

The servant repeated her words. Then—

"Thank you, m'm. Good-bye, m'm."

Apologetically, he rang off.

Then he made his report to Anthony Lyveden and left the room.

For a while the latter stood motionless, staring out of a window and across the shadowy lawn. Presently he threw back his head and began to laugh. . . .

Here his Sealyham appeared, leisurely patrolling the terrace and keeping a mistrustful eye upon a gardener whose attitude and demeanour were irregular—the one because he was clipping the edge of the grass, and the other because he found life weary and was grunting and sweating aggressively to advertise his misfortune.

"Hamlet," cried his master, "come here!" The dog obeyed gaily. "Young fellow, me lad, we're off. The interval's over, and the curtain's up. *I—have—been—found.* . . . A lady's found me—a lady with a very nice voice. She seems to know me quite well, and she sounds as pleased as Punch. It's most embarrassing, Hamlet. Very exciting, you know, but frightfully awkward. Something's required of me. I ought to respond—make some sort of

return. I must, of course. But . . . I've got an attack of stage-fright, Hamlet. I've made my entrance, and now I've nothing to say. I haven't learned any lines—or, if I have, they're forgotten. I can't pick up any cues." Hamlet yawned luxuriously and then stretched himself nonchalantly. "Yes, that's all very well; but, then, you're not shy. I'll bet you've never seen your own father. But if you were to meet him to-morrow and you didn't like the way he wore his tail, you'd—"

The slam of the front door cut short the prophecy.

An instant later Sir Andrew Plague floundered into the room.

"Never again!" he roared. "Never again!" He shook his fist at Lyveden and flung himself into a chair. "I seek to read your riddle and get bogged for my pains. Bogged and badgered and fooled, till I lose my wits! Ugh! It serves me right," he added. "I was a fool to go."

His secretary stared at him, open-mouthed.

"B—but what's happened?" he stammered.

"Happened?" yelled his patron. "I've placed you, you long-limbed fool. Seen your photograph."

"Where?"

"Where I've been, you idiot. At that wretched woman's abode. The place is crammed full of stools. You can't move without falling over them. I fell over one into a gimcrack fernery and hurt my head. I meant to ask your name, but I talked rubbish—trash . . . frightened Lady Touchstone to death. . . . But you're there all right." He waved his hand at the telephone. "Ring her up, you fool. Don't stand there gibbering. Ring her up and find out your name."

"I know it. A girl's just told me. She rang up ten minutes ago and knew my voice."

So soon as Sir Andrew could speak—

"Who?"

His secretary stepped to the table.

"Miss Valerie French," he read. "She rang up and asked if this was your house. When I said it was, she called me 'Anthony.' I thought she'd made a mistake, but she wouldn't have it. She said I was 'Anthony Lyveden.'"

"I've no doubt you are," said Plague. "But you've got some darned funny friends. What did you say?"

"Nothing. I was too rattled. I sent for William and told him to take her number."

"You never replied?"

Anthony shook his head.

"I couldn't," he said. "I was too much taken aback. But——"

The sudden stammer of the telephone-bell erased the sentence.

For a moment the two men looked at each other. . . .

Then Sir Andrew rose and grabbed the receiver.

"Yes?" he said fiercely. "Who's that?"

At the other end of the line Lady Touchstone repressed a scream.

"It's—it's me," she said faintly. Sir Andrew started violently. "Harriet Touchstone. . . . There's—there's been a terrible mistake. . . . I believe you were trying to tell me that a friend of ours was with you."

"That," said Sir Andrew heavily, "was my ambition. But you——"

"I know. It was dreadfully stupid. But when you spoke of Hamlet, I——"

"*Hamlet?*" screeched Plague.

"You said *Macbeth*!"

"I mean *Macbeth*."

Valerie picked up the instrument.

"Is that Sir Andrew Plague?"

"Get off the line!" raved Sir Andrew.

"Get off the line! I'm engaged. Lady Touchstone! Where's Lady Touchstone?"

"I'm speaking for her," shrieked Valerie.

"I'm her niece. Please will you come back at once?"

"Back?"

"Yes. To Hill Street. And bring your secretary?"

"Was it you who rang up just now?"

"Yes."

"Ah," said Sir



"He clapped his palm to the mouthpiece and set the receiver down. 'It's come,' he whispered. 'It's come.'"

"No, you don't!" yelled Sir Andrew. "Hamlet's his dog."

"Macbeth's?"

"No, no, NO! What's-his-name's. Er—er—Augustus."

Lady Touchstone laid down her receiver and looked at her niece.

"Valerie," she said weakly, "I cannot continue this conversation. Perhaps, if I knew my Shakespeare better, I should be in a position to compete. As it is . . ."

Andrew relievedly. "What's the matter with your aunt?"

"Nothing," said Valerie, laughing.

"What's the matter with your secretary?"

Sir Andrew smothered a grin.

"You must excuse him," he said. "He's lost his memory."

* * * * *

Anthony Lyveden proceeded to Hill Street alone. Alone Valerie French awaited his coming. Their respective supporters had

failed—for the same reason. Neither felt equal to facing the other again. Later, perhaps, when the monstrous tide of confusion had had time to subside. . . . So Lady Touchstone girt up her loins and fled to the hairdresser, in ignorance that Sir Andrew had sent his secretary packing and then withdrawn to his chamber and pulled down the blind.

It follows that Jack and Jill had a couple of hours together—very momentous hours. . .

As in a play, the servant shall take up the curtain.

"Mr. Lyveden."

Valerie's heart leaped.

Anthony passed into the room.

"How d'you do?" he said, smiling.

The girl tried to speak, vainly. As in a dream, she shook hands. . . .

It was he . . . Anthony . . . her darling. It was his blessed voice . . . his eyes . . . his hair. . . . She wanted to hang on to his hand—kiss it—hold it against her breast. She wanted herself to sit down and him to kneel, so that she could draw his head down into her lap. . . . Her wonderful, dazzling lover had been restored to her. She wanted to hold and be held by him. . . . It was her right.

Almost she swayed towards him. The desire to put her arms about his neck was almost irresistible . . . almost . . .

"Very pleasant hast thou been unto me."

As for Anthony, he was profoundly moved. It was, of course, a tremendous moment for him. He had stepped over the threshold into another life, through which—at first, at any rate—this glorious, shining creature was to be his shepherdess. . . .

Little wonder that they stood for a minute like two beautiful children—shy, tongue-tied, colouring. . . .

Then—

"You must forgive me," said Lyveden.

"What for?" whispered Valerie.

"For this embarrassment. It's of my making, of course. I gather we used to know one another well—you used my Christian name. . . . But, as I heard Plague tell you, my memory's gone. Why, I don't know." He spread out his hands. "I know nothing."

"You're well?"

"Perfectly."

"Well . . . let's sit down," said Valerie.

"One moment." She picked up a frame.

"Look."

Curiously Lyveden inspected his own photograph. It was an enlargement of a snapshot—a very good picture. He saw

himself seated upon a sunlit lawn, with Hamlet at ease in his lap.

"Where was this taken?" he asked.

"You were staying with us in Hampshire, three months ago."

"Only three months?"

"That's all," said Valerie.

Anthony set down the frame with a laugh.

"Three centuries or hours," he said.

"What does it matter? When you've dropped your brain into a bottomless gorge, the breadth of the gorge doesn't count." The girl sat down, and he took his seat by her side. "Do I make you feel dazed?"

Valerie smiled.

"You do a little," she admitted. "It's awfully hard to grasp. You see, you're just the same—exactly. And it's almost impossible to realise that you—well, that for instance, you can't remember that photograph, there, being taken."

"You do, obviously."

"I took it."

Anthony laughed.

"You're clearly an artist," he said. "It's the image of Hamlet."

"Hamlet?"

"The dog."

Valerie cried out with joy.

"Patch? Have you got him still? Oh, I'm so awfully glad. To—tell you the truth, I thought it was hopeless to ask."

"He's as fit as a fiddle," said Anthony.

"And a very great friend of Plague's. They're together now. He wouldn't come, you know. He said he'd wrought enough havoc for one afternoon. . . . Which brings me to my affairs. Shall I tell you my story—at least, as much as I know?"

"Do," breathed Valerie.

The six weeks' tale was told quietly, without emotion. The girl listened spell-bound. . . .

"And there you are," concluded Anthony.

"It's been a wonderful experience—intensely interesting, amazingly happy. It's been an Arabian Night. And now—the dawn's come."

"Are you sorry?" said Valerie.

Anthony turned and looked at her.

"May I speak frankly?" he said. "Remember, I'm not a man. I'm a shade—feeling its position acutely and very anxious to do the right thing."

"I'm sure you'll do that," said Valerie, smiling. "So please don't be anxious. Still, if it'll make you easier, we won't count to-day. Say what you like, please."

"Well, then, I think you're just the

most wonderful thing I ever saw." The girl gasped. "Until I entered this room I was wretched—growing more gloomy and scared every step that I took. You see, I loved my interlude—my backwater. I'd been so happy in my Arabian Night. And the cab that brought me here was rushing me out of my happiness into—I knew not what. I only knew that it couldn't ever be so jolly as what I was leaving behind. Then I saw you. . . . Don't think I'm being impertinent, or making love. I'm not. I'm stating facts. I'm a shade. I say—I saw you. . . . On the day I die, I shall see you, standing as you stood when I came into this room, and the sight will comfort me. . . . The cold, grey dawn I was so afraid of, you made golden and rosy. You cast out my fear. When I touched your hand, I felt glad to be alive. . . . And all at once, looking back, my interlude seemed very cold, very dull, very empty." With a sudden movement, he rose and picked up her hand. "I should be a graceless fellow if I didn't praise God that I had such a very sweet friend." He stooped and kissed the slight fingers. "You see," he added, letting fall her hand, "I've taken you at your word and spoken out. If I wasn't a shade, this would be a declaration of love. As a matter of fact, it's just pure gratitude. You've lifted up my heart."

Her eyes like stars, Valerie rose to her feet.

"I told you you needn't be anxious," she said tremulously. Abruptly she turned to a bookcase, disordered two or three volumes and then pushed them back into place. "The duster is mightier than the pen," she explained, over her shoulder. "I—I have to do this every day." She whipped a tear from her cheek and turned to her guest with a smile. "Let's go to the morning room, and I'll give you some tea."

Anthony followed her thoughtfully out of the room. . . .

He would not eat, but was glad of a cigarette.

"I'm so excited," he said ingenuously. "You would be if you were me."

"I am," said Valerie.

"That's very nice of you."

"It isn't," cried Valerie. "It isn't. I can't help it. You see, you—we knew you so well. You were staying with us when it happened, and——"

"What?"

Valerie put a hand to her head.

Straining her mind's eye, she was hunting

for some indication of the course she must shape. Two things stood out of the water—the race down which she was sweeping was being swept. One was a wreck—the rotting tackle of an old nightmare, which might be no longer dangerous, but must be avoided. *This was the fact that Lyveden had been insane.* The other was a bank of yellow, inviting sand stretching beside her channel for as far as ever she could see. *This was the fact that Anthony and she had been betrothed.* Of the two, Valerie would sooner have driven upon the wreck. . . .

Come what might, never, save of his own memory, must Anthony Lyveden learn what their relations had been . . . never. . .

"You disappeared," said Valerie. "Quite suddenly—for no apparent reason. We traced you to the Cotswolds, and there a body was found. They said it was yours. . . . A month ago you were seen going into the Temple. We've been searching for you ever since."

Anthony stared upon the floor.

"I think your construction of the laws of hospitality is very handsome. Have I no—no people?"

Valerie shook her head.

"No one?"

"No one," said Valerie.

"What am I?"

"A man of considerable means, of no occupation, a Major and a D.S.O."

"Un-unattached?"

"Yes."

"Thank Heaven for that," said Lyveden fervently. "I had a terrible fear that I might have a wife. That was one of the things which made me cling so fast to my Arabian Night. It would have been very awkward, wouldn't it?"

"It might," said Valerie, laughing.

"It would," said Anthony positively. "You know it would. Talk about a one-sided affair. . . ."

"You'd 've forgotten all her shortcomings," said Valerie.

"And her virtues."

"Oh, she'd tell you all those."

"But what about me? Love's very sensitive. Force Love's hand, and, however sweet the fruit you take from him, it's bound to be a bit sticky."

"How do you know?"—mischievously.

"Instinct," said Lyveden promptly. "Besides, I've a dog called Hamlet. And now you're evading the question. What about me?"

"I hope," said Valerie, "you'd remember

a certain appropriate proverb — about ignorance and bliss, and thank the good St. Luke for the nice, warm summer he was providing."

"I hope so, too," said Anthony. "But, after this afternoon, I fear the good St. Luke would go empty away. You see, I'm sure my wife wouldn't have stars in her eyes." Valerie laughed joyously. "We agreed that to-day shouldn't count, and it shan't. I promise you that. But I'd like you to know that you'll always stand alone. Your niche——"

"I'm human enough," said Valerie. "Don't make a statue of me. As to-day doesn't count, I can tell you it's meant—a good deal to me."

"You're awfully sweet," said Lyveden.

"No, I'm not. I mean what I say. When you walked into that room—I nearly cried."

"That's because of your very sweet nature. I felt embarrassed, overwrought. Out of your gentle pity, you felt the same."

"But I don't pity you. Why shouldn't I be glad?"

"Glad—yes. If you please. But it wasn't the sort of gladness I was expecting. You weren't boisterous. I'd often pictured my recognition. I always assumed I should be found one day. I saw myself being stopped—perhaps in the street. I saw people wringing my hand, slapping me on the back, stamping. . . . And I dreaded it all. I knew that I couldn't respond, and I dreaded it terribly. But you did none of these things. You seemed to feel my trouble—to understand. You were so quiet, but you seemed so very pleased."

"I was. I am," cried Valerie. "It's the biggest . . . surprise I ever had," she concluded tamely.

Anthony fell upon the substantive.

"I know. But you never showed it. That's my point. You might have been waiting and watching, with your precious eyes riveted upon a door through which you knew I should pass. And when I came stumbling out, there was your little, firm hand to hold me up." He threw back his head and put his hands over his eyes. "You must forgive me. I—I can't get you out of my head. I ought to be asking all manner of questions, I know. I ought to be wild to hear all about myself. But I'm not. I don't care. I don't want to know." He let fall his hands and leaned forward with burning eyes. "I want to make the most of to-day. The rest can wait. I've all my life to listen to the mistakes I've

made. But to-day . . . I feel I'm standing with you, looking down on the world. To-day our position is sublime, because I'm a shade. I can exult in your company . . . stare at my exquisite guide . . . open my heart, because—to-day doesn't count. Tomorrow you'll be Miss French and I shall be Mr. Lyveden. To-day I'm a child, and you're—just Valerie. You've seen a child run to its betters, cling to their knees, look up into their face. If you asked it why, it couldn't tell. Neither can I. But I think it's because it—knows—they—understand."

Valerie crossed to the hearth and stood by his side.

"I'm not your better," she said, "but I—understand. Take hold of me, if you will. To-day the clocks have stopped. There is no time."

Very gently he took her in his arms.

"You wonderful creature," he breathed. "You glorious, wonderful thing. How can you understand? Why am I not afraid to take you like this? Why do I dare to lay my cheek against yours? Why do you suffer me? Convention's not dead. But you . . . to-day . . . We're out of the world; we must be. I hardly know your name; yet we speak the same tongue. I've called and you've answered—and nobody else would have heard. We're alone on the edge of some cliff overhanging the earth. . . . I was alone . . . and now you've come to my side." He turned his head sharply and peered into her eyes. "Am I mad?" he demanded. "Do I speak as a fool?"

"No," said Valerie quietly. "You've spoken the absolute truth. I let you hold me like this because it's my will that you should—because I have need of your arms. I hoped that you'd put them about me, and then you did."

"Why? Why did you hope it? What's this astounding language that only you and I speak? It isn't love. It can't be. I haven't been here half an hour. . . . I throw an invisible ball—you catch it and throw it back. I lose my head, to find I've not lost it at all. I flounder, to find I'm on rock. What does it mean? . . . Never mind. I don't want to know. I'm a king—for an afternoon."

"Listen," said Valerie. "What made you want to—to set your cheek against mine?"

"I don't know. I don't care. I——"

"Try to think."

She felt his temples contract.

"It sounds absurd," he said, "but it

seemed—it seemed so natural. The moment I saw you, you filled the whole of my brain. The questions I've asked, I've asked with difficulty. Up to just now I was acting, Valerie. Now I'm myself. I feel at—at ease, somehow. Why don't you mind?"

"I feel at ease, too."

"I know, I know. Why? You don't know. You can't say. It's natural and yet unnatural. It's out of order, yet



"Little wonder that they stood for a minute like two beautiful children—shy, tongue-tied, colouring,"

right. It's like a fairy tale, where the poor boy kisses the beauty he's never set eyes on before. And nobody minds, and even Convention approves." He held her off firmly. "But this is Life—where there aren't any fairy tales and where this sort of thing isn't done."

Her eyes upon his, the girl was thinking furiously.

Should she tell him the truth . . . explain that *his heart had thrown back* . . . shatter the brilliant bubble which he had blown? The time seemed ripe. Surely no harm could result. And the bubble would not be shattered, but rather turned to crystal. Yet . . . 'Love's very sensitive. Force Love's hand, and . . . ' The jest rang in her ears. Her imagination turned it into the bell of a buoy, swinging to mark that yellow, inviting sandbank she had determined to shun.

"I know," she said gravely. "I know that as well as you. Yet I'm not cheap in your sight."

"*Cheap?* You're the finest gold that ever gladdened man's eyes."

"Then why do you frown so, Anthony? To-day I can read your fairy tale and share your dream."

He drew her head down on to his chest.

"I love your hair," he said simply. "It smells so sweet. You can't be a princess, or it'd be all golden. And so you must be a queen."

"For an afternoon," she whispered.

He put a hand under her chin and raised her head.

"For ever," he said, smiling. "We're in the land of Oxymoron. To-day doesn't count, yet it will last out Time. It's not in the almanac, yet it's gold-letter. I've lost my memory, yet I can never forget. And heresy's orthodox, and fairy tales are fact. . . . D'you think, if I kissed your mouth, it'd turn into a flower? It's awfully like one."

"I—I don't think it would."

He kissed her tenderly. . . .

Presently she put up a hand and touched his hair.

* * * * *

Anthony walked back across the Park with his head in the air.

The man was exalted. The dog had just had his day. And, while all days are as grass, the splendour of this afternoon would never die. That he had been born again was nothing at all. His heart had leaped and had been caught and held at the very top

of its bent—so held that it would never come down—sink any more. Of this he was quite certain. No disaster could alter his state. Not even the sudden production of a duly accredited harem could shatter this illusion. He had been given the original—the model after which illusions are made. Like fire, it had been filched out of heaven.

That he did not perceive what any fool could have told him, is not surprising. His memory was gone. It lay like a silent pool, walled up with rock. Upon this pool, for more than forty days, his eyes had been riveted. And nothing—no sight, or sound, or scent had stirred its waters. Then had come Valerie. . . . The moment he saw her he knew that if ever the pool was to be troubled, now was the appointed time. Peering at its surface, he found it motionless as death. She whom no man, having seen, could ever forget, with whom he had once been familiar, had failed to wake the faintest ripple upon those silent waters. Therefore Anthony *knew* that the strange exhilaration he had felt was not out of Memory. And if it was not out of Memory, neither was it by Love. That was obvious. Love was a slippery fellow, but he was not so swift as all that. Besides, it was to be hoped that he (Anthony) had not lost all control. As for the lady . . . Oh, indubitably it was not love. . . .

His mental arithmetic was, I think, sound. Anthony had done his sum right and had got the wrong answer. Any fool could have got the right answer without doing the sum at all. But that is because lookers-on see the best of the game. And if anyone but a fool had done the sum, he would have seen instantly that the error lay in the premises. Whereupon he would have worked backwards, with the result that in about two seconds he would have located the mistake. This was that while the surface of the pool of Remembrance was motionless as death, its depths were considerably troubled. Still waters run deep.

It was as he was approaching Kensington Palace Gardens that Anthony Lyveden realised with a shock how very slight was the report which he was prepared to render. Sir Andrew would naturally expect to be regaled with a wealth of crisp information regarding the former existence of his *protégé*. . . . Anthony began to wonder what on earth he should say. He could not explain that he had been in Paradise. For only one thing, not to put it too high, the knight would hardly appreciate such a translation. . . .

With his key in the lock, Anthony fingered his chin. Then he made a grimace and tiptoed into the hall.

The drone of a voice in the library fell upon his ears. He stepped to the door.

"And so, you see, young fellow, we've got to part. I'm a creature of habit—bad habit. Don't think I don't know that. It's not my fault. My temper's spoiled. Men are such maddening fools. . . . And when you're a creature of habit, your habits—good and bad—count higher than anything else. Well, you're a habit of mine—a bad one, of course. Whoever heard of a dog getting up on a bed? Bringing his fleas and dirt into your blankets? The moment you're out of the house, I'll have 'em cleaned. . . . The point is, I'm used to you. D'you hear? Used. And there's the rub. In a sense, you've been—my dog . . . my little dog. . . . I know I've been rough, but I think you've understood. You've never been afraid. You've— Hang it, you ugly swine, you've seemed to like me. And I'm—I'm a man of few friends. . . . Habit, habit, habit—that's all it is. Why does one feel the breaking of habits so much? You and your man Wood—Lyveden, are in my pocket. I shall feel lost when you're gone. I contracted for service: he's given me infinitely more. Why? Heaven knows. But he has. Something that's not for sale. And I've got used to it, you brute, as I've got used to you. . . . Well, it's my own fault. The whole affair's been fantastic, and fantasy's not in my line. I knew it, of course. I'm guilty. I stole by finding. And now I've got to pay. . . . Come here. . . . D'you remember, a week ago, I threw a book at you? And it—it hurt you, and—you—cried out? . . . I'm sorry for that—very. Ah, you're a forgiving swine. . . . But I—I'd give a hundred pounds to call that moment back . . . my fellow . . . my little dog. . . ."

Anthony stole upstairs like a thief in the night.

By the time he had bathed and changed, his plans were made, and when Sir Andrew descended at eight o'clock, his secretary was seated at the great table, writing assiduously.

"Hullo," said the knight, "I didn't know you were in."

"I expect you were dressing," lied Anthony. "I hurried rather, because I'm a little behind." He picked up a sheet of paper. "There's a letter here, sir, from—"

"I daresay there is," said Sir Andrew, crossing to a great French window and opening it wide. "Tell me your news."

Lyveden laid down the paper and rose to his feet.

"First and foremost," he said, "by the grace of God, I'm unattached. I've no dependents and no responsibilities. Beyond that, I don't know a great deal. I shall hear more to-morrow, and if you can spare me—"

"Yes."

"—for one or two hours—"

"Your time's your own," rapped Sir Andrew over his shoulder. "You needn't bother about notice. If you want to go to-morrow, go."

"I don't want to do that."

"If it's any convenience to you to stay in this house until—"

"If you will keep me," said Lyveden, "I'd like to stay on." Sir Andrew swung round. "I don't want to leave your service."

"Don't think I can't spare you, you know."

"I know you can," laughed Anthony. "But it seems that, when I went down, I was out of a job. I hope you're not going to sack me because I've changed my name."

For a moment the giant stared at him. Then he turned on his heel and walked out of the room. . . .

When, five minutes later, his secretary came to tell him that dinner had been announced, the knight was pacing the garden with Patch at his heels. And when, still later, the two men were sitting at meat, the sober candle-light revealed three short white hairs adhering to Sir Andrew's sleeve.

Master and man observed them simultaneously.

For a moment the giant regarded them. Then he grew slowly red.

"Off one o' the chairs," he muttered, slapping his cuff. "The brute must be moulting." Here the butler approached, whisky in hand. "No, you fool, no. Take it away. Bring two bottles of Clicquot. I—we want a change."

* * * * *

At half-past five the next morning Sleep took his leave of Lyveden and, being gone, flatly refused to return, although importuned to do so for thirty restless minutes. I fancy the whimsical god was getting his own back. The night before he had met with a cold reception—had had, in fact, to cool his heels for a long hour while Anthony paced his chamber, thinking high thoughts. And possibly the repulse rankled. Be that as it

may, at six o'clock Anthony yawned, sighed, sat up and then switched on the light.

From the foot of his bed a bright, brown eye, set in a white ball, regarded him.

Anthony stared back.

"I'm sorry, old chap," he said, "but it can't be done. Dogs have the knack, I know; but we poor men haven't got Sleep on a lead." A piece of the ball detached itself and moved up and down. "The question is, my fellow, what shall we do. The tea won't be here for an hour, and I'm not even drowsy." He slid out of bed and stepped to a window. Pulling the curtains aside, he saw the dawn coming up over distant Mayfair. "I know," he said, turning to meet the eye, which was watching him fixedly. "I know." He lowered his voice to a whisper. "*Walks.*"

As a charm pronounced, the word left 'sesame' standing. The latter merely opened a door. The former turned a one-eyed ball into a well-bred Sealyham, panting with excitement and leaping like a young ram. . . .

A quarter of an hour later the two entered Kensington Gardens and raced for the Round Pond.

It was a perfect morning. Trees, grass and earth were drenched with a heavy dew; the air, washed as a garment, smelled like fair linen; London was at her toilet and her best. Then the sun got up, to overlay the lawns with transient silver, mark out pale effigies of walks and avenues, and aid a flickering breeze to send the jolly pond into long ripples of Ægean laughter.

Anthony and Patch found their adventure sterling—too good to curtail. Indeed, they were deep in Hyde Park, when seven o'clock was unbelievably announced. Reluctantly enough, they turned homeward and, presently skirting the Serpentine, fell in beside the Row.

Till now the Park had been theirs, but here a sprinkling of riders was sharing the brave sunshine. Anthony watched their going with envious eyes. He must, he felt sure, have ridden a lot in the shadowy past; the saddle attracted him so strongly, and the sight of a good-looking horse so gladdened his eyes.

There was a beauty coming—a great, rich brown, walking towards him. Look at that fine, deep chest, that small clean-cut head, those steady great eyes, those delicate ears, the elegant line of that neck, those clean big-kneed legs—above all, that free, true action. . . . What a horse for a man to ride! Ah, it was a girl in the saddle . . .

a girl with auburn— *Good God, he knew her!* Her name was . . . was . . . *André.*

It was at this moment that André Strongi'th'arm saw Anthony Lyveden for the first time. She started so violently that the good-looking brown leaped almost out of his skin, and it took quite a lot of cajolery to reassure him. When she had him in hand, Lyveden stepped under the rails and took off his hat.

"How d'you do?" he said nervously.

André tried to reply, but she could not speak.

The girl was rattled. The sight of Anthony Lyveden—no shade, but the man himself—had thrown her into a panic. For a moment she thought she must faint. More. André knew in a flash what this panic, this faintness meant, and the knowledge tied up her tongue and set her heart pounding against her ribs. She knew that the love she had choked was no more dead than she was.

André began to tremble.

"I'm—I'm afraid I've given you a shock," said Anthony, with an embarrassed smile. "You—you didn't expect to see me."

André's lips were moving, but no words came. She continued to stare fixedly.

Anthony laughed uneasily.

"I might have risen from the dead," he said.

His brain was thrashing, hammering, wrenching at a shut-fast door—the door of Memory. He had remembered—did remember the girl. The door had been opened, then. . . . He remembered faintly that he had met her alone—more than once. Where? When? Why? He could not remember. The door had been slammed before he could . . . And *she*—Good God! Why did she look so strange? Why didn't she speak? What was the matter? Who was she? *André.* Yes, but André *Who?* And what was she to him? What . . . They had talked—intimately. Yes. That was right. Intimately. . . . More. Infinitely more. *Looking upon those lips, he could remember the feel of them—perfectly. They were soft, warm lips . . . very soft . . . very—* How did he know? How on earth did he know? If he remembered this, why couldn't he remember—Because the door was shut. Because . . . Was this Memory? Or had he dreamed some terrible—Oh, of course it was Memory. Undoubtedly. Well, then . . .

It was, indeed. For an instant a corner of the veil had been lifted. Then the corner had slipped, and the veil had fallen . . .

back . . . into its place. For the second time the waters of the pool of Remembrance

"Well, I—I don't know what you can have thought of my clearing out as I did." André started. "You must have thought it very strange."

There was a moment's silence. Then—

"I didn't expect anything else," faltered the girl.

Anthony stared at her boot—a tiny, patent-leather affair, too small for the shining iron.

"I don't know why you say that," he said slowly.

"D'you mean to say you're glad to see me again?"

"Of course," cried Anthony.



"She pulled off a glove and stretched out a little, white hand. Anthony took it in his."

had been considerably troubled. But this time the surface had swayed.

The girl was speaking, haltingly.

"You might . . . In fact, we—I did think you were dead. You—you disappeared. And—and last time we met . . ."

She stopped dead.

"Yes?"—eagerly.

Her eyes held his for an instant, striving to read his mind. Then they fell to her knees.

"We won't talk about that," she said in a low voice.

"But I want to," cried Anthony. "Please. You see—"

"What?"

thankful to be on apparently firmer ground. "Aren't you glad to see me?"

"Glad?" She leaned far out of the

saddle, with burning eyes. " 'Glad' ? What d'you think . . . Anthony ? "

There was no mistaking her meaning. If ever love flamed in a phrase, it went flaming in that.

" I—I don't know what to think," he stammered, flushing to the roots of his hair.

This was the bare truth. For the matter of that, he did not know what to say, either. He had seen the blow coming: then he had lost sight of it: and now it had fallen, and he had been knocked out. All the time his brain was pounding upon that cursed door—clapping its eye to the keyhole—trying to picture the ghost which lay behind. And this was pure folly, of course. The only thing to do was to study the facts he had and learn of them, to endeavour to piece together this terribly vital document—at least, such fragments thereof as had been vouchsafed him. With a supreme effort, he managed to focus his mind. *This girl—André—loved him. And he . . . Reference to his fragments argued that he had given her cause. . . .* As for his state, it seemed absurd to say that he had lost his memory. Of course she would think it a lie, and with good reason. If he had lost his memory, how did he remember her? Oh, why had he come out this sunshiny morning? Why. . . . No. That was a rotten thought. His way was clear, if steep. . . .

He lifted his head.

" I haven't been myself for a long time," he said slowly. " But now, when I looked up and saw you coming . . . " He stopped and passed a hand across his forehead. " Tell me what you've been doing," he added desperately.

André raised her eyes and stared down the shadowy Row.

" Oh, floating round," she said carelessly. " Riding . . . thinking . . . trying—trying to forget."

" You sound as if you'd been unhappy," said Anthony. André shrugged her shoulders. The man braced himself. " Was that because of me ? "

The girl stiffened.

" What right have you to ask ? "

" I think, perhaps," he said slowly, " I had a right once. If I remember . . . " He broke off helplessly. " Won't you help me ? " he said. " It's very difficult."

" It was because of you."

There was a long silence. The murder was out.

At length—

" I'm very sorry," said Anthony. " I think, perhaps, when I tell you everything, you'll understand. I will—very soon. Not now. It's hard to explain. Don't think too hardly of me," he added piteously.

André stifled a cry.

" Don't, Anthony, don't. How can you talk like that ? " She set her hand on his shoulder. " You've said you're glad to see me. What more do I need ? I thought you must never want to see me again. I thought it was finished . . . dead. It nearly broke my heart, but I made sure you didn't—care."

Anthony caught his breath. Blow after blow now. What did it matter? Besides . . . It wasn't his fault, of course, but—he owed her something. She'd suffered a lot, plainly. She'd said as much. *And—it—was—all—through—him.*

" Poor lady," he said gently. " You won't be unhappy any more ? "

The touch on his shoulder became a grip, tense and quivering.

Lips parted, eyes blazing, her beautiful, careless face aglow with ecstasy, for a moment André let the world slip. . . .

Then the hand slipped away, and she took a deep breath.

" Where are you now ? " she said suddenly.

He told her and she turned her horse round.

" I'll ride back with you," she said. " No." She checked the great brown. " We'll go our ways. To-morrow we'll ride together. You shall ride Joshua." She patted the brown's shoulder. " And now—good-bye."

She pulled off a glove and stretched out a little, white hand.

Anthony took it in his.

After a moment's hesitation he put it to his lips.

A further instalment of this story will appear in the next number.



A GARDEN GATEWAY. BY L. C. NIGHTINGALE.

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DERELICT?

By FAY INCHFAWN,

Author of "Homely Verses of a Home Lover."

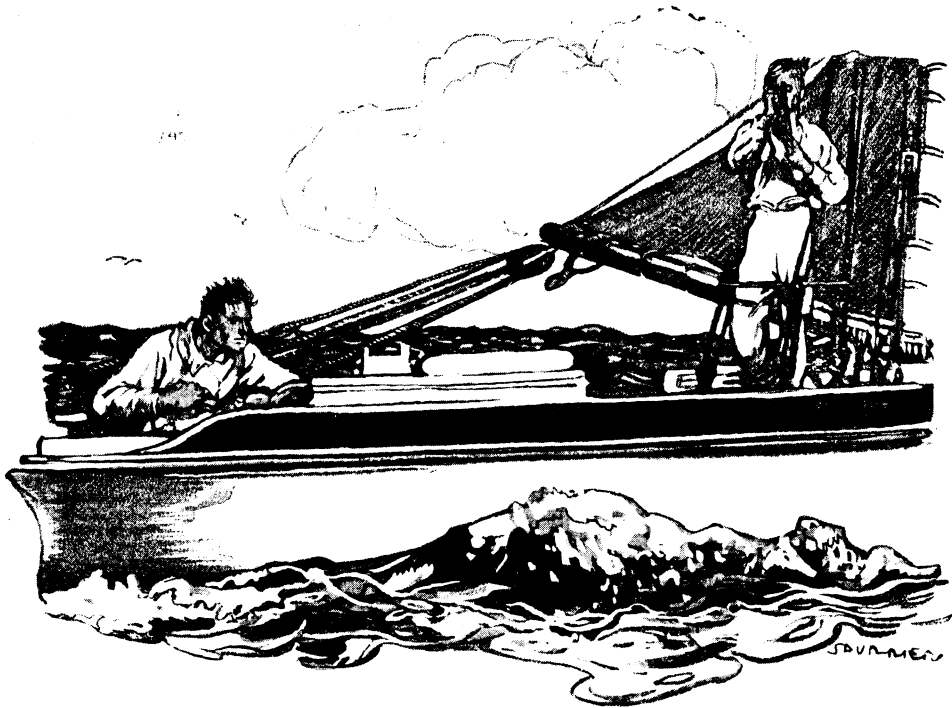
OLD lover, here am I!
Yes, high and dry
Above your furthest line of sun-baked weeds.
I, who know some of, but not all, your deeds—
Know you to be a lion and a—lamb!
Was I not made that you might meet my needs?
Yet here I am.



Now—*now*
About my battered prow
Creep little grasses, blossoming:
And pimpernel—a trivial thing;
A butterfly, with powdered wing,
Alights and pauses lazily:
Birds sing. But all is naught to me,
Who am for ever listening
For your voice, O my sea!



Have you abandoned me, then? Nay!
I will not doubt nor question. Have your way.
Leave me awhile. Then, if it needs must be,
Send out a tidal wave—and so reach me!



"The course is east by north, as near as I can make it."

WHAT FOR?

By RALPH STOCK

ILLUSTRATED BY STEVEN SPURRIER

TROAR felt his arm seized as in a trap, and himself jerked into the deeper shadows of Wattle Street.

He stifled the cry that rose to his lips, and began to think as rapidly and coherently as the pain in his arm allowed. Police? The idea of police in Wattle Street, Woolloomooloo, died at birth. Escape? To move was anguish. Resistance? Futile! His thoughts completed the small circle of possibilities and, finding no outlet, reverted to the ever-growing pain in his arm.

The hand that held him thus, by sheer pressure, must belong to someone of prodigious strength. His glance travelled upward, encountering in turn a pair of large and dilapidated shoes, blue trousers seemingly overfull of leg, a swelling expanse of

grey jersey, and an unkempt, bullet-shaped head set on a neck like a stallion's.

"Hold-up, eh?" Troar inquired evenly.

"You've said it," admitted his captor.

"Price of a doss; that's all I want."

There was no violence in the tone, no threat. Here was a man making a perfectly legitimate statement of his requirements.

"Why?" said Troar.

"Why what?"

"Why is that all you want? Why not take all I've got while you're about it?"

There was a pause before the other answered.

"I'm not like that," he said; "but I don't stand for no monkey tricks, neither. What about it?"

The steel fingers bit deeper into Troar's arm.

"That's for you to say," he jerked out between clenched teeth. "This is a hold-up, isn't it? Well, get on with it, because if you—don't let go—of—my arm——"

"Cripes!" muttered the man, and caught Troar as he fell.

"That easy!" he exclaimed, kneeling over the frail form slumped against the wall. "Who'd a-thought *that* easy?"

Troar opened his eyes on the giant standing over him.

"I don't think you can have any idea of the grip you've got on you," he said faintly; "and—and there's something up with my heart," he added apologetically.

The other said nothing at the moment, but stood looming immense in the shadows of Wattle Street. Troar stirred and grimaced with pain.

"Can't be broke," said the giant judicially.

"Lor, no," agreed Troar. "There's something on me somewhere. Do you mean to say you haven't gone through me?"

"I meant yer arm," corrected the other.

"Can't break 'em that way."

Troar's body commenced to shake. The giant peered closer in alarm, and saw that the convulsions were caused by mirth. He drew back and stood with his stocky legs slightly apart.

"Well, if you ain't a corker!" he breathed.

"Let me return the compliment," laughed Troar. "This must be the quaintest hold-up on record. I can't move my arm yet, and the money's in my right pocket. You'll have to fish for it."

And that is what the giant did, carefully selecting the requisite amount from the handful that he brought to light. After which he helped Troar to his feet with the gentleness of a woman, and together the diverse pair passed through the dingy portals of Duggan's Doss House.

Protruding from his ticket office window like an obese gargoyle, Mr. Duggan was directing a sluggish stream of humanity along the passage and up the stairs, at the head of which it dispersed amongst a battered honeycomb of cubicles.

It was July, and the park and a newspaper are not quite proof against Sydney's mid-winter. During this month, and perhaps the ones on either hand, the otherwise fortunate Antipodean "down-and-out" is forced to seek the shelter of roofs such as Mr. Duggan's, which flourish like fungus in Woolloomooloo. (Yes, there is such a place, and that is how it is spelt.) Here he pays his pence and takes his choice. There are beds of every epoch and

in every stage of decay, each complete with straw mattress and blanket as near clean as the previous occupant has seen fit to leave them. There is a looking-glass, should he wish to consult it, which is unlikely, and there are boards, broken and dangling from their nails, which in a distant and more resplendent past afforded a certain amount of privacy.

With experienced eye the giant chose the least dilapidated cubicle in the place. It mattered not that an Italian oyster-opener was already in possession and removing his boots. "Vamoose, dago!" uttered in a nasal drawl, and entirely without animus, caused him to smile ingratiatingly and retire, boot in hand.

"That'll do you," he advised, indicating the better bed of the two, and Troar took it without question. He was not in a condition to question anything. After the antics his heart had taken to performing of late, he was in the habit of lying supine until that eccentric organ readjusted itself.

So he lay, watching his companion. Troar found him more entertaining than anyone he had met for a long time. The fellow's undressing was a revelation. Under his shabby exterior lay a physique to ponder on, and he was evidently in the habit of pondering on it. Slowly he closed his right fist, bent the arm to display biceps and forearm to advantage, and executed a devastating upper-cut for Troar's benefit.

"That's what does it," he announced amiably.

"I should think it would," encouraged Troar.

"And that's what *did* it," added the other enigmatically, casting his splendid length upon the bed.

"It doesn't surprise me," said Troar.

"Oh, it don't?" The giant reared himself on an elbow with an air of affront. "Takes a good bit to surprise you, don't it?"

"Perhaps it does," admitted Troar.

"So you wouldn't lose sleep over it if I was to tell you I'm—if I was to tell you who I am?"

"I shan't sleep in any case, but no, I don't think I should."

"Maybe you've guessed already?"

"I haven't tried."

A look of child-like disappointment ruffled the giant's heavy features.

"And you don't care one way or another?" he suggested.

"I can't say I do."

"There, now," mused the other, "that's how much good publicity is. Can't make people take notice. Posters, press—what are they? Whisk by one while you're thinking about the missus and kids, and give the other the 'go by' for the race results; I dunno." He swung on to the edge of the bed, and sat with his massive shoulders hunched dejectedly. "Then when you don't want it— There'll be columns about me to-morrow morning—columns!"

Troar refrained from comment, which in itself seemed to impress his companion.

"You're a queer one," he observed. "Don't know as I've met your sort before. Is there anything you do happen to care about?"

Troar contemplated the grimy ceiling with half-closed eyes for a space.

"Not that I can think of at the moment," he said, which simple confession extracted a shout of laughter from the giant.

"You're doing me good, anyway," he said. "My name's Ponsonby; what's yours?"

"Smith," said Troar.

"Good enough to be goin' on with, ain't they?" grinned Mr. Ponsonby. "And now what about your boots and the rest of it?"

Troar suffered himself to be "put to bed" in expert fashion. Mr. Ponsonby had not been a "second" half his life for nothing, he pointed out.

"But what d'you call those?" he demanded, regarding Troar's nether limbs with mingled pity and contempt.

"Poor things, but mine own," murmured Troar. "Better cover 'em up if you don't like them."

Instead, Mr. Ponsonby drew back a pace and subjected his patient's anatomy to the critical survey of an expert.

"It beats me," he muttered reflectively.

"Well, that's something, isn't it?" suggested Troar.

"It beats me what a feller like you is for," ended Mr. Ponsonby on a note of frank perplexity.

"So it does me," said Troar; "but I shouldn't let it worry you. Perhaps I was created for no other purpose than to provide you with a night's lodging."

"That's so," agreed the other on reflection. "You never know, do you?" He retired to his less-favoured couch, and lay pondering a while. "You never know in this funny old world. Just a tap, and they're after you— Columns about it to-morrow

—columns!" He turned on his side, and the words trailed off into heavy breathing. Mr. Ponsonby slept.

Troar did not. Consequently he both saw and heard a man enter the cubicle about an hour later. He was a large man, and there was little diffidence about his movements as he approached Troar's bed and ripped the blankets from it in one forceful jerk.

"Cold," he was good enough to explain.

"It is," agreed Troar pleasantly.

"And that's all you've got to say."

"That's all," beamed Troar.

"Well, you know best."

"Not much good saying things if you can't back them up, is it?"

The nocturnal visitor peered closer through the gloom.

"Sick?" he barked.

"Fair to medium, thanks. But if you want to carry on any further conversation, I should advise you to speak lower, or you'll wake my friend yonder."

"Oh"—the other turned in the direction indicated—"and if this friend of yours is woke up, what does he do?" he inquired significantly.

A demonstration was immediately forthcoming, for at that moment Mr. Ponsonby opened his eyes. They were rather small, but wonderfully quick eyes, and in the murky glow of a turned-down gas-jet they glinted unpleasantly. Their owner uttered no word, made no movement, yet such was the effect of his homely face, framed in a coarse grey blanket, that the intruder appeared stricken with apoplexy.

"Kinks!" he gasped.

"That's what," drawled Mr. Ponsonby; "so now you know what to do."

Of this there could be no doubt. Without a moment's hesitation the visitor dropped Troar's blankets as though they had been red-hot coals, and tip-toed gingerly from the room, his ungainly shadow lurching before him.

Mr. Ponsonby grinned.

"That's what *I'm* for," he pointed out with an air of quiet self-satisfaction, "and don't you forget it, kid."

Troar was not likely to. It was a quaint, rather cruel coincidence that on this night of all others his own futility should be so vividly demonstrated. Place him amongst real live men, and he was helpless. He found himself envying such a perfect animal as Mr. Ponsonby with all the bitterness of a frail intellectual. Intellect! What was it but a flail with which a man thrashes himself

to death? How much did it make for happiness compared with health, strength, and a simple mind? We were deforming ourselves.

He was awakened by Mr. Ponsonby tugging at his sleeve. It was still dark, save for the sickly gas-jet, but time to be up and doing, by the burden of his friend's remarks.

"Four o'clock. Are you coming?"

"I suppose so," said Troar dazedly. "Why?"

"You know best as to that," snapped Mr. Ponsonby. "But if you've got to make yourself as scarce as I have, and want to do it with me, you'll have to get a move on."

Troar dressed under the vague impulse that it was undesirable to be separated from Mr. Ponsonby, and for the same indefinite reason he followed his guardian down the stairs and into the street.

Outside the door and leaning negligently against the wall was a girl muffled in a shawl.

"Lil!" exclaimed Mr. Ponsonby at sight of her.

"Better come in here," she advised, and kicked open a swinging door labelled "Restaurant," which gave access to a wilderness of sawdust and tea urns. "Who's this?" she demanded, scrutinising Troar across a yard of soiled tablecloth with a pair of soft yet searching brown eyes.

"Mate," said Mr. Ponsonby. "He's all right."

The brown eyes were temporarily appeased.

"I *thought* you'd make for Duggan's," said the girl in rapid undertones. "Whatever made you do it, Kinks?"

"Do it?" Mr. Ponsonby flung out his enormous hands in a gesture of protest. "What was I there for? It's the game, ain't it? It's what they pay for. Well, I earned my money fair and square. Is it my fault if the other feller dies of a clean knock-out?"

"It's not that," the girl broke in. "What made you clear out?"

"Clear out?" echoed Mr. Ponsonby, still on a note of energetic protest. "I didn't clear out. They cleared me out like so much dirt the minute the news come through. Said it was the best till things blew over. Set me adrift without a cent, they did. If it hadn't been for 'his nibs' here——"

The girl could not wait for explanations. Her hand went out across the table and rested on Mr. Ponsonby's arm.

"Anyway, you did it, Kinks," she said.

"And now you'll have to keep right on. Two came last night, one plain, one coloured."*

"To you?"

"Of course. Where d'you suppose they'd come?"

"Ain't it wonderful?" mused Mr. Ponsonby. He was slumped back in his chair, gazing wistfully across the table. "And we was to have been married after this fight, Lil."

"What's the good of talking?" demanded the girl, cutting into her lover's reverie like cold steel. "You've got to clear. You can send for me after if—if you like. Listen, I brought a few things. They're upstairs with Mother Duggan. Go and get them."

Mr. Ponsonby leant across the table, his homely features transformed with tenderness into something almost beautiful.

"Lil!" he said.

"Go get them," repeated the girl.

Mr. Ponsonby obeyed, and Troar found himself confronted by a pair of soft brown eyes that seemed to be searching for his soul. It was embarrassing. He shifted his position uneasily. But the girl relieved him of any necessity to make conversation.

"You'll look after him, won't you?" she said.

"I?" Troar was startled into self-consciousness. "Isn't it more a case of his looking after me?"

The girl shook her head slowly.

"He's nothing but a kid," she said, mother-love welling in her eyes; "just a kid. It isn't all here, you know," she added, indicating the muscles of her firm, rounded arm.

"Isn't it?" Troar smiled whimsically. "I've come to think the best part of a man is, anyhow. Do you know what he said?"

The girl shook her head.

"He said it beat him what I was *for*."

"It would," she said; "but it doesn't me."

Troar leant forward despite himself.

"If only you could tell me——" he began.

"I can," said the girl. "You're meant to look after my boy—to bring him back to me." Her head was bowed over the table. "You've *got* to bring him back," she added, so low as to be hardly audible.

Something took hold of Troar, robbing him of his sense of the ridiculous. At that moment there seemed nothing ludicrous in

* Meaning officers of the law, one in plain clothes, the other in uniform.



"Mr. Ponsonby was engaged in examining a sack that held Lil's 'few things,' and expatiating on the catholic nature of its contents."

a wisp of human inefficacy such as he deemed himself being asked to mount guard over a six-foot-two pugilist. Someone depended on Troar, believed in him; that was the reason.

"I'll do my best," he promised, and their hands met across the table in a clasp of mutual understanding.

There was the leave-taking of Mr. Ponsonby, a short practical affair of a few low-spoken words and a caress, and the two

men were in the street, walking unhurriedly and by devious ways towards the outskirts of the city.

"Not the country," advised Troar. "They'd get us easier there."

"Reckon they would," agreed Mr. Ponsonby; "but where else is there to go?"

"One of the beaches. We can lie doggo for a bit, and think."

So toward noon they lay in the shadow of some scrub oaks on the cliff-top overlooking Emerald Bay.

Below them a pigmy fleet of yachts rode at their moorings, and Troar lay staring down at them, lost in reverie. Mr. Ponsonby was engaged in examining a sack that held Lil's "few things," and expatiating on the catholic nature of its contents.

"Ain't women wonderful?" he remarked, laying reverently on the grass a "hussif" complete with needles, thread and buttons, a cold pie, and a well-known brand of alleged cough cure.

Troar nodded.

"Have you ever been to sea?" he inquired irrelevantly.

Mr. Ponsonby confessed to a year before the mast aboard a coasting schooner in his youth, but what really interested him at the moment was the grain sack.

"Good enough," said Troar, "because I've been thinking."

"Oh, you have." His partner brought to light a tin of bully beef and some peppermints. "Always did like peppermints," he added reflectively.

"And it seems to me," continued Troar, "that the only thing left for us to do is to take one of those yachts and set sail."

Mr. Ponsonby paused in the mastication of peppermints, and regarded Troar with sudden interest.

"Now, that's what I call an idee," he admitted.

It was. Moreover, it was an idea carried into execution that very evening. There were certain obstacles, but one after another they crumbled before the practical onslaughts of Mr. Ponsonby. There was a watchman in charge of the yachts, so that to approach them by boat was out of the question, and Troar confessed his inability to swim more than thirty strokes, much less the good quarter of a mile that separated them from the craft of his choice. Then how to get under way without attracting attention? And, having got under way—But the rest was left on the accommodating lap of the gods.

Under cover of darkness a weird object slid from the rocks of Emerald Bay and progressed slowly but surely towards an auxiliary cutter of some twenty tons register looming dimly white in its path. It was composed of Mr. Ponsonby, with a bulgent grain sack on his head, and Troar clinging limpet-like to his shoulders.

A little while, and the two men stood

naked and shivering with cold in the snug saloon of the *Minx*.

"Rub down and get into something, or you'll die," asserted Mr. Ponsonby, and, knowing this to be nothing less than the truth, Troar obeyed. Meanwhile, and still in a state of Nature save for his trousers, Mr. Ponsonby proceeded to get under way. He had driven cars, he informed the universe, and if he couldn't extract an answer from the junk that constituted the average marine motor-engine, he would want to know why. He persisted in his inquiries—an immense white figure lurching and straining at the flywheel—until an answer was forthcoming, at first hesitant, then more coherent as the engine picked up and settled into the rhythmic cadence dear to the heart of the engineer.

"Shove in the clutch," he ordered, after the patter of his feet on deck, a rattle of chain, and the splash of water told that the mooring was cast off, and Troar obeyed.

"There!" said Mr. Ponsonby, snuggling the tiller under his arm, and steering for the lights of Sydney Heads. "Now they can talk."

II.

INTENSE languor and a splitting headache had seized on Troar. He lay on one of the saloon settees, shivering and burning by turns. Throughout the night Mr. Ponsonby sat at the tiller, or lashed it, and descended to tend the clattering engine. Then, some time after dawn, it stopped abruptly, calling Troar back to consciousness by sheer cessation of noise, so that he heard his partner's forceful expressions of displeasure on discovering that the fuel had run out, and his herculean efforts on deck to hoist the mainsail single-handed.

Somehow he must have succeeded, for there followed the ripple of water past the yacht's side, and a gentle list told that she was under way. Snatches of song came from the cockpit. Mr. Ponsonby was satisfied with his work. Presently he came below.

"Wind's abeam," he announced. "She's steering herself, bless 'er!"

"Where for?" muttered Troar.

"The Fijis," grinned Mr. Ponsonby. "May as well make a clean break while we're at it. Bound to hit something heading north-east."

Troar lay with closed eyes, while a spasm of pain contorted his face.

"I'm sorry—" he began.

"What for?" demanded Mr. Ponsonby.

"For being such a wash-out. I—it takes

me like this sometimes. It'll pass—or I shall, one of the two—and——”

“Ere”—his partner leant forward and spoke through a mouthful of cold pie—“don't you talk like that. I didn't bring you along because you was likely to be useful.”

“Then why did you?”

Mr. Ponsonby stared at his patient during a gastronomic pause.

“Maybe I like something to look after,” he explained, with a hint of diffidence.

“Well, you've got it,” said Troar.

“Try some of Lil's dope,” suggested Mr. Ponsonby, producing the miraculous cough cure, and Troar resigned himself without a murmur.

“We're doin' all right,” soothed his partner. “Seen any charts about?”

“You'll find them in the starboard locker,” said Troar, “next to the sideboard.”

Mr. Ponsonby had turned in the direction indicated, when he whipped round with the unexpected swiftness of his kind.

“How in 'ell did you know that?” he demanded.

“One thing I can do is nose around,” replied Troar. “And here's something more for your information: the freshwater tank's empty.”

“Empty?”

“Yes. They were cleaning it out for a fill-up, by the look of things. But don't worry; there's a beaker in the fo'castle that ought to last, with luck.”

But Mr. Ponsonby was already immersed in the charts.

“Can't say as I know much about these pictures,” he confessed. “Looks to me as if they only take in the coast. 'Owever——”

A report like a pistol-shot came from above—the slatting of a slack mainsail—and an uneasy motion told that the *Minx* had come into the wind.

It was the first contrary gust of a gale that blew for three days.

Hove to, the yacht rode it bravely. Mr. Ponsonby was perfectly cheery about it. This was a fight, and he liked fights. So much was evident when after each spell on deck he staggered into the saloon a dripping, exultant figure.

“Third round!” he would bawl, and make himself a mug of tea over the gymballed oil stove for ard.

As for Troar, he ate little, drank less, and thought frantically. He found it a physical impossibility to move, and lay staring at the wildly-swaying white-enamelled beams

overhead with a fixed smirk on his pinched face.

Once, when his partner was on deck wrestling with sheet and halyard, he laughed aloud—if it could be called a laugh. The sound escaped him at thought of the words “You'll take care of him, won't you?” What a jest! Yet at the time she had meant it. He was sure of that. She must have seen something—— He slid from the settee to the floor—Heaven knows with what intent—and was flung headlong into a corner. With clenched teeth he gathered himself for another effort that met with a like fate, and finally felt himself caught up like a wayward infant and gently deposited in the deep bunk of the owner's cabin.

There he lay, still thinking. The *Minx* was drifting. For three days and three nights she had drifted, and might continue so to do for another three, or another ten, for that matter. Where to? What lay between themselves and the desert of the South Pacific? Even if the gale moderated in the next hour, how would they steer? How much water was there in the beaker? Ah, he did know that—possibly a gallon.

His self-communings were disturbed at intervals by the appearance of Mr. Ponsonby with a steaming mug of tea in his hand, which Troar invariably refused on the ground that he had just had some. He *could* do that! His ability to do it, in spite of Nature's violent dictates to the contrary, gave him unwonted satisfaction. For he had long since come to a definite and clear-cut resolve in relation to this partner of his. If either of them lived, it must be Mr. Ponsonby. This decision was not a matter of conscious self-sacrifice on Troar's part. It was an obvious conclusion based on the requirements of Nature, and backed by a promise given with clasped hands in a Woolloomooloo restaurant. Troar was like that. Perhaps it was what the girl had seen. . . .

He began to wonder when his happy-go-lucky partner would appreciate their position, and what would happen when he did. It was evident that up to the present Mr. Ponsonby had hardly given it a thought. He had been otherwise engaged, which was as well. But now that the gale was spent, and there was little to do but sit at the tiller and whistle for a fair wind, it was equally apparent, from his puckered brow and air of abstraction, that he had begun to think.

“I reckon we drifted south most of the

time," he mused. "Anyway, I'm heading N.N.E. D'you see anything better?"

Troar admitted that he did not, and there followed a long and silent interval, during which the *Minx* pounded her way at a bare two knots through a still lumpy sea.

"Cripes!" shouted Mr. Ponsonby of a sudden. "We'll never get nowhere this way!"

It was coming, Troar told himself. A full realisation of his plight was dawning on this genial giant, who, within a week, and failing rain or a landfall, would be a raving madman at his partner's throat. Already he was seeing all that he had to lose, and the likelihood of losing it.

"We've got to get out of this," he muttered, staring stonily over the heaving wilderness about them. "You don't know all; I just got to—" Troar noted the change in the pronoun without the flicker of an eyelash. "We was crazy to do this thing."

Troar did not answer, which seemed to annoy Mr. Ponsonby.

"It was your idee," he accused. Then, after another interval of thought: "And it was all right—for you. No ties—nothing. Ain't that so?" he demanded petulantly.

Troar nodded.

Mr. Ponsonby laughed suddenly wholeheartedly.

"Darned if I wasn't getting my dander up with you," he railed, giving Troar a playful pat on the back that shook his frail body to the bone. "You! As if it's your fault!"

But this lightsome interlude did not deceive Troar. It was a flash of sunlight between gathering clouds.

"I donno," wailed Mr. Ponsonby later in the day. "Wind don't seem to shift. With this abeam we'd be doing eight, but what's the good of heading for South America? Lor', couldn't I do with a pint! Where in 'ell are we?" They were the cries of a lost child.

"Seems funny to me," he went on presently. "Those old coves with whiskers and a sextant can find out where they are, and I can't. But I can't, and that's that. The bare sight of figures is a knock-out to me. . . ."

Troar heard no more. His partner's last utterance had lit a train of thought that blinded him to all else. It is doubtful if Mr. Ponsonby had ever made such an illuminating remark. It had been in Troar's mind to forestall the inevitable that night,

or at latest the next. It was the best he could do, and would save considerable trouble. But now, and if he could do this thing—if he could do it. . . .

He went below. There was a sextant in a highly varnished case on one of the shelves, as he had thought, and a nautical epitome amongst the books. He examined them. He knew nothing of deep-sea navigation, but a quick brain and a leaning towards mathematics soon placed him in possession of the rudiments. There was no chronometer aboard, and a log would have been useless during the gale, even if they had thought of such a thing, so that longitude was out of the question, but there were latitude and judgment, and those were something—as much as our ancestors found necessary to circumnavigate the globe. With an artificial horizon he took sights. With paper and pencil he worked out examples, and behold, latitude leapt at him. Was this the conjuring trick of the sea—the finding of a ship's position on a waste of waters—that so impressed the landsman? Why, it was child's play!

With flushed cheeks and unnaturally bright eyes, Troar went on deck that morning and prayed for the sun. His prayer was answered, and for over an hour he stood wedged in the shrouds, taking sights in spite of every interruption. Mr. Ponsonby wanted to know what he was "playing at," since when he had acquired his "skipper's ticket," and if he didn't think it more use to "take the tiller for a spell." But Troar had found something to do. He was a deaf and dumb mute, chasing latitude.

Mr. Ponsonby was getting really annoyed when a stifled exclamation escaped Troar, and, screwing down the sextant with an air of finality, he dived below.

Mr. Ponsonby waited with commendable patience an hour, two hours, before his partner again appeared in the hatchway.

"We're all wrong," he jerked out. "I've got our latitude, and we're wrong."

"That so?" said Mr. Ponsonby, with the air of one humouring a child.

"Yes. We can't have drifted as far as we thought. She must have reached a bit while we were hove to. We're a hundred miles or less south of Lord Howe Island."

"Who says so?"

"I do."

"Oh, you do!" Mr. Ponsonby stared down at his partner and shook his bullet head slowly.

"But I've proved it," protested Troar.

"It's as simple as falling off a log. I've proved it, man!"

"And you want to tell me you've learnt in a few hours what takes a grown man half his life to get hold of?"

"Yes," said Troar, "if the grown man's a fool."

Mr. Ponsonby laughed, but it was not a pleasant sound, and there was a glint in his small eyes.

"Well, you don't tell me," he observed. "You come and take the tiller, and give me a spell, that's what you've got to do, kid."

"Right," said Troar. "The course is east by north, as near as I can make it, which brings this breeze abeam, and if we don't sight Lord Howe to-morrow——"

"The course is north by east," corrected Mr. Ponsonby heavily, "that's what the course is. I can smell land ahead, and that's better than all your fandanglements. North by east, young feller, and don't you forget it."

The futility of further argument silenced Troar. With the tiller under his arm, and Mr. Ponsonby sleeping audibly in the saloon, he wondered what it was best to do. He felt little resentment at his partner's disbelief. It was to be expected. The aggravation of the situation lay in the fact that if the present course were held, they would miss the nearest land by a comfortable margin, and raise no more for at least five hundred miles, which meant they would never raise it. Yet how was it possible to convince Mr. Ponsonby of that? As well argue with an elephant.

On the other hand, if they steered east by north at approximately eight knots for six hours, the *Minx* would be in the neighbourhood of Lord Howe's latitude, and probably in sight of the island itself, considering that sailing directions gave it as three thousand feet height, and visible at sixty miles in clear weather. . . . As to what Mr. Ponsonby would do when he found his precious course changed. . . . Troar eased the main sheet, and watched the compass needle swing to east by north, whereat the *Minx* surged into the encroaching darkness as though freed of a restraining hand.

And Mr. Ponsonby still slept. For nine providential hours, while speeding under a star-pricked sky with a steady breeze abeam, he slept the sleep of the dead.

At dawn he thrust a tousled, bullet head into the cockpit, blinked at his benumbed partner, and consulted the compass. On the

instant the muscles of his face became rigid. His small eyes narrowed to mere slits.

"You're headin' east by north," he exploded, and his devastating arm was upraised.

So was Troar's. It pointed directly behind Mr. Ponsonby's head. He turned, and out of the sea, not ten miles distant, towered the mighty pyramid of Lord Howe Island.

III.

It was on Lord Howe that Troar came upon a week-old newspaper containing the information that in the matter of Buck Ingram's demise during a recent prize fight, a verdict of accidental death was returned, and his opponent, one Kinks Conolly, was exonerated of all blame.

Troar read it aloud, which caused Mr. Ponsonby to execute an elephantine edition of the Highland "fling," and lapse into thought.

"All for nothin'," he mused. "Think o' that, would you?"

Troar was thinking of it.

"And it's me for Sydney town by the next boat," chanted Mr. Ponsonby. "But what about the yacht? Plain theft, ain't it?"

Troar lit a cigarette.

"I imagine it is," he said. "But she happens to belong to my uncle, so I ought to be able to do something about it."

"Your uncle?" Mr. Ponsonby regarded him with frank incredulity.

"Yes. You needn't believe me unless you like, of course, but there it is. That's why I chose her."

"And you? What had you done?"

"Nothing," said Troar. "That was my main trouble."

"Then why in 'ell did you clear out?" blurted Mr. Ponsonby.

Troar flicked his cigarette ash over the verandah rail.

"I wanted to find out what I was *for*," he said.

"And did you?"

"Yes, I rather fancy I did."

"And what was that?"

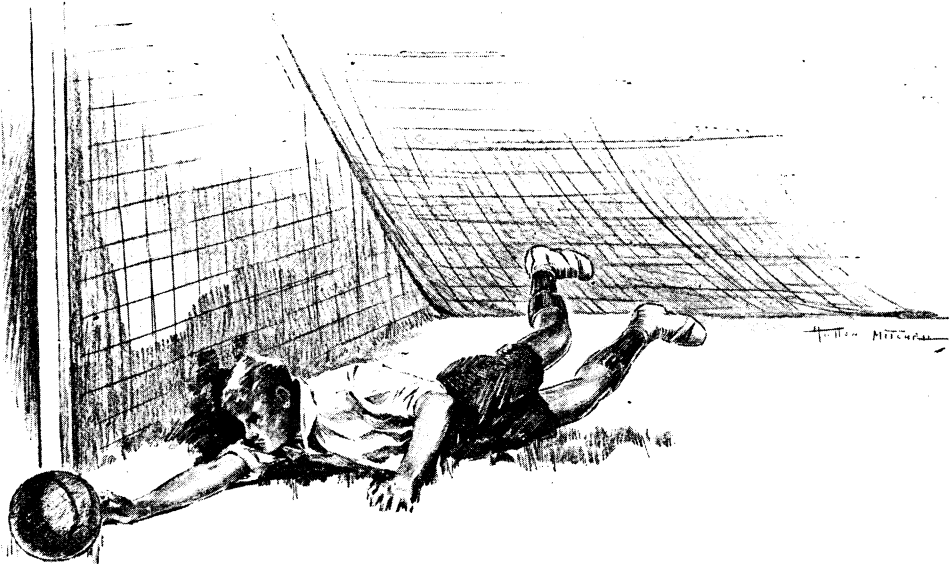
"To steer east by north," said Troar.

There was a long pause, during which Mr. Ponsonby stared over the sea with his bullet head at an angle. Then—

"What's your Christian name?" he asked irrelevantly.

"James," said Troar. "Why?"

"It's goin' to be *his*," said Ponsonby; "that's all."



"The ball struck his outstretched fingers and whizzed harmlessly past the outside of the post."

THE PENALTY

A FOOTBALL STORY

By A. A. THOMSON

ILLUSTRATED BY HUTTON MITCHELL

THE town of Pelbank was football mad. It ate football, drank football, and dreamed football in its sleep; and, let me tell you, when the club of a small Midland town, not even in the Second Division, has reached the Fourth Round (Proper) of the English Cup, that small town has every reason to be excited. Pelbank United had—by sheer impudence, one would have imagined—wriggled their way further in the competition than any lowly outside team had ever done before. and now, on this particular afternoon, they were drawn to play Oldcastle Albion, a big top-of-the-table First League Club, at home. No wonder Pelbank seethed.

Could the United pull it off? On paper, of course, they couldn't. But what (patriotic Pelbankers demanded) was paper form in a Cup Tie? What, they urged, had "Final Whistle" said, in *The Sporting Argus*, only last Sunday? "... The Albion may find the plucky little Pelbank

side by no means such an easy nut to crack, and their sharpshooters will discover in A. J. Ledgway, the United's six-foot amateur goalie, a veritable Rock of Gibraltar."

And that was that. Even sporting journalists speak the truth sometimes, and it was a literal fact that what Gibraltar is to the British Empire, A. J. Ledgway was to Pelbank United. He was "a tower that stood foursquare to every wind that blew," and the fact that Pelbank had won each of their previous Cup Ties by the only goal scored was not the least proof of his prowess. Strong as a lion and agile as a cat, he had a way of gathering a red-hot shot and punting it gracefully back to the centre-line that made Pelbank's supporters thrill with ecstasy. "'Im a goal-keeper?" the captain of a recent visiting team was reported to have grumbled. "'E's a blooming brick wall, that's wot 'e is!" Well, that is the sort of person A. J. Ledgway was, and if local office-boys regarded him

as greater than Nelson or Wellington, who could blame them?

As early as half-past one a big crowd was merrily clicking through the turnstiles, and rattles, whistles, and tin trumpets were making their concord of sweet sounds. The sun was shining and the crowd was on exceedingly good terms with itself. Decidedly all was right with the world. "Shall we win?" roared a red-faced gentleman armed with a muffin-bell. "Not 'arf we won't. We've got old A. J. between the sticks, and they won't get a four-point-seven shell past 'im!" If this gentleman, who was ringing his muffin-bell so vigorously, had known what was happening to A. J. Ledgway at that precise moment, he might, as was once remarked upon another historic occasion, have been wringing his hands instead.

* * * * *

A. J. Ledgway sat at a desk in the outer office of the Pelbank branch of William Pringle and Co., metal merchants. His neat lounge suit could not hide the fact that he possessed what lady novelists term the figure of a Greek god, and his face was surprisingly boyish—particularly so when you knew that he had been the firm's local manager for several years. Pringle and Co.'s main offices were in Birmingham, but Pelbank was an important branch in direct touch with the local foundries, and A. J., except for the assistance of his junior, young Hetherington, was in sole charge. There was a knock at the outside door.

"Come in," said A. J.

A girl entered. She was dark and slim, and her chin had a defiant little tilt which seemed to contradict the expression of her brown eyes.

"Good afternoon, Miss Hetherington," said A. J., his heart suddenly beginning to bump with a violence practically unknown among International goal-keepers.

"Good afternoon, A. J. Isn't Teddie here? I expected to meet him."

"He was here a moment ago. If you wouldn't mind waiting—"

Just then the inner door opened sharply, and William Pringle himself, senior partner and founder of the firm, thrust his head out.

"We'll see you now, Ledgway," he said.

"Excuse me," A. J. threw back over his shoulder to the girl, and followed his chief into the inner room, shutting the door behind him.

Two other men were in the room. One, a bald-headed, beady-eyed individual, had a

pile of ledgers open at a table in front of him, whilst his companion sat apart, gazing impassively out of the window. After a moment's tense silence Old Man Pringle spoke.

"You've been with us seven years, Ledgway," he began, "and I've trusted you as I would my own son. You've had entire control of the whole of our turnover for this district, and I'd have staked my life on your being straight."

A. J. faced his employer unflinchingly, but said nothing.

Old Man Pringle's voice shook slightly as he went on: "And now our accountant finds that your books and your balance are hopelessly at variance. There's a clear deficit of nearly five hun—"

The beady-eyed one looked up from his books. "Four-eighty-seven fifteen ten," he said crisply.

"Now, Ledgway, have you any explanation to make?"

A. J. shrugged his big shoulders. "No sort of explanation that would be of any use," he replied.

"But I can't believe— Look here, do you realise what this means?"

"I know exactly what it means."

"You fully understand that you can and will be arrested for misappropriation of the company's funds?"

"I understand perfectly."

"But, Ledgway . . . Antony . . . for Heaven's sake, man, have you nothing to say?"

"Just this," said A. J. "Will you give me till half-past four?"

"Do you hope to get the money by then?"

"No, I don't," replied A. J. laconically, "but— I know it looks like mere impertinence for a man in my position to ask a favour of you—still, I'm going to. I'm down to play for the town against Oldcastle this afternoon. I don't look like playing football again for some time"—here he smiled grimly—"and so I'd like to see the club through this particular match. Will you give me till half-past four?"

"Most irregular, most irregular," grumbled the bald-headed accountant. Old Man Pringle turned towards the window.

"What do you say, inspector?" he asked.

"That's for you to decide, sir," said the third man stolidly. "So long as it's understood that—"

"You would regard it as somewhat comic under the circumstances," said A. J., "if

I were to give you my word of honour to turn up here at four-thirty, but as I should spend the afternoon in the sight of the entire population of Pelbank, you wouldn't have much difficulty in keeping your eye on me."

"That'll suit me," grunted the inspector. "See you outside."

He took his hat and walked out.

"And now, for the last time," urged Old Man Pringle, "have you no statement to make?"

"Only that I admit I'm responsible," said A. J. steadily. "Good-bye, sir." And he moved towards the door in the inspector's wake.

As he strode across the outer office he felt a slim hand laid on his arm. Nora Hetherington was standing beside him.

"A. J.," she said quietly, "I didn't mean to listen, but I couldn't help hearing—everything."

A. J. cursed inwardly. She was the last person in the world he wanted to know about this. And yet what did it matter? Everybody would know that same evening.

"Well?" he demanded almost gruffly.

"It's no business of mine where the money's gone, but they've given you till half-past four to replace it, haven't they? Can't you spend the time in hunting up your friends? Surely some of your relatives—"

A. J. laughed bitterly. "I've as much chance of raising five hundred as I have of finding five million. Besides, I want to put in my last afternoon with the old team. Pelbank expects that every man, and all that sort of thing."

She put out her hand impulsively. "I—I hope you'll win this afternoon."

"Thanks," said A. J. Then he passed out into the street, where the inspector was waiting for him. They walked along together.

"I hope my affairs won't spoil your afternoon," said A. J. "If you're going to keep an eye on me, you'll see the whole of the game, at any rate."

The inspector eyed him half admiringly. "Well, I must say you're a cool hand."

"I can't help thinking about to-morrow's papers," said A. J., with a wry smile. "'From Goal to Gaol! Sensational Arrest of Amateur International!' Darned funny, isn't it?"

"Want to go to your digs. first?"

"No, thanks. My bag's in the dressing-room. Here we are. I'll see you through the barrier. By Jove, there's going to be a jolly old sardine-tin of a crowd to-day!"

* * * * *

I make no claim to originality in remarking

that the ways of the female mind are past finding out, neither can I attempt to explain Nora Hetherington's sudden decision. About her feelings towards A. J., prosperous business man and popular idol, she had never been able to make up her mind, but about her feelings towards a very different A. J., a proved defaulter in imminent danger of prison, she had no shadow of doubt whatever. She knew quite simply that she was in love with him, that he was in a bad hole, and that she must get him out of it. She hurried from the office and walked quickly to the house where she and her brother lived. Teddie was nowhere to be seen, so a council of war was out of the question. Well, it didn't matter very much. Teddie never had been much of a counsellor at any time.

Five hundred pounds! She thought ruefully of what the heroine of a novel would have done under the circumstances. A novel-heroine would have tripped up to her boudoir, unlocked her jewel-case, and drawn out a flashing emerald necklace; then she would have been driven to Bond Street in the second Rolls-Royce, and the jeweller would have handed her ten thousand pounds (presumably in a brown paper parcel) over the counter. Nora laughed. Jewels were decidedly "off." Then she laughed again as the big idea—a really staggering idea—came to her. She would sell her property! Property is a magnificent word, isn't it? When she and her brother had been orphaned, some years before, the money (what there was of it) had gone to Teddie, and the property (such as it was) had been willed to her. True, that property consisted of a single house—the house they were living in—but it was her very own, and she was of age. She would sell the house.

But who was going to buy a house and pay cash for it before half-past four? Was there anyone? Yes, there was. There was an old Mr. Lampeter, that crusty, crotchety old solicitor, who lived at Mirksfield, thirty-five miles away. It seemed a miracle when she remembered that this queer old man had almost pestered her into selling, and had offered her six hundred pounds only a week or two before. Teddie had implored her to sell, too, but she had hung on. She had been intensely proud of her "property." But now, of course, things were different. She ran out into the garden. Teddie's motor-bike was in the shed. Good! She ran back to the telephone in the hall.

"Give me Trunks. please—Mirksfield 793."

She hung up the receiver and waited, tapping the hall-carpet with an impatient shoe. The call came through quickly. (This, I suppose, was another miracle.)

"Is that Mr. Lampeter?" she inquired eagerly. "It's Nora Hetherington speaking. Do you still want to buy my house? No, not horse—*house*?"

"Of course I want to buy your house," came the grumpy reply. "Haven't I asked you a dozen times—"

"Will you buy it this afternoon?"

"My dear young lady—"

"You made an offer about a fortnight ago, and you know as much about the property as I do. Will you have a cheque ready for me in just over an hour's time?"

"My dear child, are you going to fly over with the house on your back?"

"No, but I'm coming over, and I'll bring all the papers. It's just two now. I'll see you at three-fifteen. Good-bye."

It took her only five minutes to change her dress. (I told you she was no novel-heroine.) Then she ran out to the big "Indian" in the shed. Thank goodness,

the petrol-tank was full! She could not help laughing. It was all so exquisitely Drury Laneish. A moment later she was dodging the crowds that still flocked towards the town football ground. As she swung out on to the Mirlsfield road her engine seemed to hum a refrain: "Isn't this . . . absurd? Isn't this . . . absurd? Like a com . . . ic film. Like a com . . . ic film . . ."

* * * * *

A roar of applause went up as, a few minutes before half-past two, the Albion eleven trotted out into the enclosure, and



"You gave him till half-past four. . . . The money's here!"

a still deeper roar greeted "Tiddler" Andrews, the Pelbank captain, as he led out his men, trim and dapper in their green-and-gold jerseys. The immemorial ritual took place. The rival captains shook hands with each other and with the referee. The coin spun and fell, and the crowd cheered again as "Tiddler" pointed to the town end of the ground. A. J. Ledgway, in a flaming red jersey, strolled nonchalantly towards the opposite goal, and the reporters in the press box sucked their pencils and wrote down "Giant custodian"

They were off. The ball went flying out to the left, and the wiry little Oldcastle winger dribbled it swiftly down the side-line until Briggs, the Pelbank right-back, hustled him into touch. From the throw-in "Tiddler" Andrews cleared with a big kick, but the ball came straight back to the toes of the Oldcastle forwards. Passing and repassing like clockwork, they advanced in a serried line until their "centre," beautifully placed, sent in a stinging shot, breast-high and swift as the wind. Moving across the goal-line at lightning speed, A. J. took the ball neatly on his chest, and, eluding two charging opponents, sent it with a huge punt over the half-way line. The crowd yelled with delight. The light and nippy Pelbank forwards now began to force their way into the picture, and the game progressed at a tearing pace. "Hammer and tongs," scribbled the reporters; "fast and furious . . . ding-dong exchanges all the time" Every man in the Pelbank team was playing the game of his life. Their only hope, as each of them well knew, was to get one goal in the first half and then defend desperately, hanging on to their lead like grim death. Again and again they attacked fiercely, and for at least a quarter of an hour A. J. had a fairly quiet time. Gradually, however, the stamina and weight of the big First League eleven began to tell, and the Pelbank attacks slowly but surely lost their sting. Long swinging passes came flying out to the Oldcastle wing men, and the tide of battle surged back towards A. J.'s stronghold. He enjoyed the fun immensely, and shots or rushes came alike to him. He tipped a "rip-snorter" from point-blank range over the bar, and from the resultant corner punched a flying header almost into the stand. Every shot that whirled in was neatly fielded and banged back into play. His two full-backs, panting but heroic, kicked and tackled as if their lives depended

on the issue. How long could they keep it up? As A. J. went down on his knees to a fast grounder, the long-drawn "phee-ep" of the whistle sounded. Half-time! A breather at last.

* * * * *

At that exact moment Nora Hetherington hurtled into Chestnut Avenue, Mirlsfield, thirty-five miles away. Number Fourteen Yes, that was the house An astonished maid showed her into Mr. Lampeter's sitting-room.

"Bless my soul!" was all the old gentleman could say. "Bless my soul!"

"Is your cheque ready?" asked Nora.

"My dear child, your volcanic methods positively make me shudder."

"Nonsense, Mr. Lampeter. You said on the 'phone that your last offer held good. I've brought the deeds, and if there's anything more to be signed, you're a lawyer, and you can make out any other form that may be necessary now."

"But—"

"Mr. Lampeter, do you want the house or not?"

"Of course I do, but you're like a whirlwind. Let's see your papers. . . . Yes, these are all in order. Will you sign this one? Right. Now, how about the money?"

"I suppose," ventured Nora desperately, "you couldn't possibly give me notes?"

The lawyer broke into a chuckle. "Certainly," he said. "Are you sure you don't want coppers?"

He walked to the safe and took out a cash-box, from which he counted out twelve crackling fifty-pound notes. "And now the receipt. That will be all."

"Thanks ever so much," cried Nora, thrusting the notes into her jacket-pocket. "Good-bye. . . . No, thanks, I'm having tea in Pelbank."

The transaction had taken exactly five minutes. She knew that Mr. William Pringle, a gentleman of absolutely regular habits, always stayed at the Crown Hotel when he was in Pelbank. If she could get to the hotel in an hour, she would have ten minutes to spare. (Work it out for yourself.) She did the distance in fifty-nine minutes. Heaven and the big "Indian" alone know how she did it, but there are at least three village policemen who will vouch for her speed to this day.

She almost flung herself upon the hotel porter.

"Mr. Pringle, miss?" cried that astounded

functionary. "Why, he's gone down to the football match!"

She could have screamed with vexation. Why hadn't she thought of that before? Of course the arrest would be made after the match. Heavens! The match would be over now. Still, it was only twenty past four. Perhaps even yet—— She reached the big gates of the ground in one minute. They were wide open. From within, one continuous roar arose to heaven. Leaning the bicycle against the wall, she ran inside and made her way to the entrance of the stand.

A madly cheering official, with a rosette the size of a cauliflower, allowed her to squeeze past him. (His excitement seemed to have bereft him of all sense of his duties.) "Score was nil—nil, miss," he yelled at her; "they're playing extra time!"

Wildly she scanned the sea of faces in the packed stand. Yes—no—yes, there he was, only a few paces from her. She literally fought her way to Old Man Pringle's side. The din was terrific.

"Mr. Pringle!" she shouted. "You gave him till half-past four. . . . The money's here! Can you stop the inspector?"

In that uproar their conversation was as private as if they had been in a locked room. She pressed a bundle of notes into his hand.

"All right!" he bellowed back at her. "We'll catch him at the dressing-room door, if we can only——" And then such a roar rent the sky as had never been heard in Pelbank before.

"Dear me," said Mr. Pringle, as a delirious gentleman from behind knocked his hat off, "I believe Pelbank has scored a goal!"

* * * * *

Pelbank's goal was a brilliant flicker, but a final flicker, nevertheless. They had shot their bolt. The pace had been deadly, and forwards, halves, and backs seemed run to a standstill. In that last ten minutes of extra time A. J. Ledgway alone stood between them and defeat. He kicked and punched and threw away like a man possessed, and picked the ball from the enemy's very toes time and time again. The minutes seemed hours. The referee glanced anxiously at his watch. One minute to play. A. J. had just fisted out a big drive. The ball went to the Albion centre-forward, who dashed for goal and poised himself to shoot. What happened next was stark tragedy. Briggs, the Pelbank back, rushing up wildly from behind, crashed the "centre's" feet from under him. The whistle's shrill remonstrance coincided with the crowd's groan of despair.

It was a glaring foul, well inside the penalty area. A deathlike silence prevailed as the Albion captain placed the ball on the fatal spot. With terrific force he drove it towards the right-hand bottom corner of the net—a perfect shot. A. J. went down with a veritable panther's spring. The ball struck his outstretched fingers and whizzed harmlessly past the outside of the post. The match was over. Pelbank had qualified for the semi-final. Yelling like Red Indians, the spectators surged on to the pitch.

* * * * *

"By Jove," exclaimed Old Man Pringle, "they're carrying him off shoulder-high."

"You'll stop the arrest?" pleaded Nora.

"I'll postpone it till I get some satisfactory explanation; but how you come to be mixed up in this, Miss Hetherington, I can't imagine. I'll see the inspector, at any rate."

"Then I think I'll go home," said Nora faintly.

The swaying crowd parted them, and Mr. Pringle elbowed his way lustily to the dressing-room door. He found the inspector standing outside, and spoke a few hurried words to him.

"That's real good news," said the man of law. "I'd have hated doing it, even if the crowd hadn't half murdered me first. Will you wait for him in the amateurs' dressing-room, sir? He's the only amateur playing, and he'll have it all to himself."

The cheering was coming nearer. A door slammed violently. The players, almost the bodily victims of their own popularity, had escaped from their worshippers and got in safely. A red-jerseyed figure walked along the corridor towards the inspector.

"And now for our appointment," said A. J. Ledgway.

"Appointment's a wash-out," grinned the inspector, "but there's a gentleman waiting to see you—in there." And he thrust A. J. into the dressing-room.

"What does this mean?" demanded A. J., striding towards Mr. Pringle.

"It means that you're not to be arrested—at least, not till you've explained to me——"

"I gave all the explanation there was. I'm responsible for the missing money, and you've a perfect right to——"

"The missing money has been returned." "Returned? That's impossible. Who could have——"

"That's a question that can only be answered by a young person by the name of Hetherington."

A. J. took a quick step forward.

"You mean young Teddie's brought you the money? He's told you?"

If Old Man Pringle experienced surprise, his face did not show it.

"Sit down," he commanded, "and tell me the absolute truth about this. I don't

Jimmy's not a dirty player—he just lost his head; but he fouled, and the thing was done. I was the goalie, and the penalty shot fell on me. It would have broken Jimmy's heart if I hadn't stopped it. Well, it was just like that with Teddie Hetherington. He'd been a young ass and got into debt—lost his head



"A. J. dashed inside and burst into the drawing-room, where Nora was sitting."

know whether you're a prize sportsman or a prize idiot, but I'll give you my word no one shall be arrested if you tell me the truth."

Then A. J. Ledgway made the longest speech of his career. "I hardly know how to. . . Did you see poor old Jimmy Briggs foul that Albion fellow this afternoon?

and borrowed the firm's money. I found out, of course, and I told him he was a fool, but that I'd see him through; thought I'd have time to scrape the money together, but the accountants jumped on me so quickly that I didn't get a chance, and so it seemed that the only way of seeing him through was to go to gaol. Just like stopping the penalty

shot, wasn't it? I expect he's spent to-day among the money-lenders. Anyhow, as you say, he's made good the deficit——"

"I didn't say so," interrupted Old Man Pringle; "it was his sister who——"

"But she didn't know."

"She believed what you led us to believe—that you——"

A. J. leaped to his feet and gripped his chief's arm. He realised the trap he had fallen into.

"It's all lies I've just told you!" he cried. "I took the money myself. I took it, I tell you!"

"Rubbish!" snapped Old Man Pringle. "You've given yourself away badly. You're a Quixotic ass, but——"

"You won't smash Teddie?"

"I've given my word I won't smash anybody."

"You're a brick, chief, and . . . I say, do you know where Miss Hetherington is now?"

"She said she was going home."

Just as he was, A. J. ran from the room and pelted up the street—red jersey and all. The front door of the Hetheringtons' house was open. A. J. dashed inside and burst into the drawing-room, where Nora was sitting. He picked her up in his arms and hugged her to him. Then it occurred to him that some explanation of his conduct was necessary.

"I—I—I thought I'd find you at home," he said lamely.

"Home?" echoed Nora, with a queer little smile. "I haven't got a home of my own any longer."

"You won't need one," laughed A. J. Ledgway.



HERE'S TO THE SPRING-TIME!

OH, here's to the Spring-time and the bright, bright day,
A great gold lamp a-shining on the big highway,
A pixie army scattering little pixie men,
And a giant's chuckling laughter thundering now and then!

Oh, here's to the summons and the glad, glad call,
And the folk that run to meet it, stumbling, great and small!
Oh, tie your shoes up tightly, but let loose your hair,
For the wind is blowing sunshine and it's everywhere!

Oh, here's to the trumpets and the windmill's drum,
And the piping fairy music telling Spring has come!
The organ of the chimneys swells the sweet, sweet sound,
And you hear the doorways opening underneath the ground.

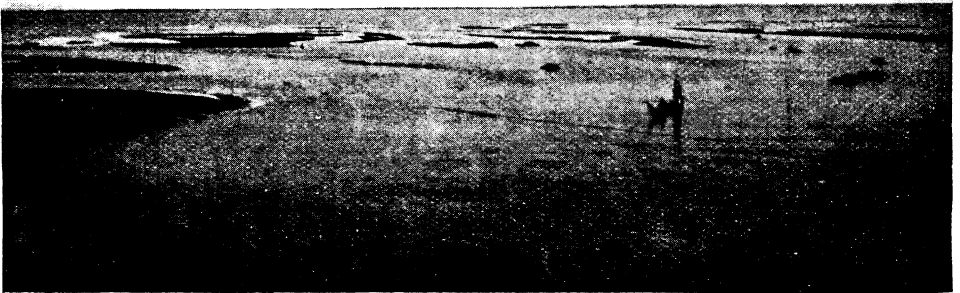
Oh, here's to the Spring-time and the bright, bright roads,
And the little travelling people with their tinkling loads,
The pleasaunce and the orchard and the woodland all a-wing,
And the clapper of the church-bell clam'ring "Spring, Spring, Spring!"

THE MARSH ARABS OF MESOPOTAMIA

By G. LESLIE

A VERITABLE journey into fairyland, it seemed, to sail down stream between tall, waving grasses, rustling and whispering in the morning breeze, and turning from grey to gold as the sun rose and poured its glory upon them.

Gradually the canals grow larger in size, the ground rises slightly higher, marsh grass gives place to palm trees, and in this little space—a mere strip of land along the river bank—are built the homes of the marsh Arabs.



THE OPEN WATER OF THE HAMAR LAKE.

The Hamar Lake lay behind, and the Euphrates—swift-flowing and sullen-looking with its muddy complexion—had begun to narrow as it carried its voyagers on to Marshland.

A network of canals goes off from the river, each one more enticing than its predecessor. They seem to beckon the wayfarer to creep in and explore the mysteries of Marshland; but, once inside, it would be a prison indeed to the stranger who had ventured there, so dense, so close, and so tall is the marsh grass, and so numerous and intricate the waterways. Unaided Nature has formed a gigantic maze with a skill that ever rivals that of human effort.

The houses themselves are quaint and fantastic, and of all sorts and conditions, from the tiniest hovels to large and massive buildings, magnificent in their architecture. Yet each and all are made of reeds, that wonderful marsh grass that seems surely to conceal within itself some wizard's power. Tall and graceful and delicate with its feathery top it grows, so fragile that a gentle pressure sideways crushes it instantly, so strong that, used as a pole, it will push a heavy boat up stream.

Nature the magician showing us another of her wonders! Then man must needs come and attempt to convert this thing of mystery into something practical, a dwelling-place, the most intimate of all possessions



ARABS BY THE LAKE-SIDE.

to him—his home. Is it surprising that the result is fantastic, odd, and utterly attractive?

The heart of Nature and the heart of man's life are closely interwoven there, for his home is the expression of man's life. In Marshland a man's home is very much all his. He and his family make it. Possibly, being an Arab and living in "a land where all things are the same," he watches his womenfolk do all the work, remonstrating in the approved fashion if it does not progress fast enough or in the exact way in which he desires that it should.

Of material there is no limit, nor of time either. Life seems as long and unbroken and limitless as appears the vast desert that lies beyond the fringe of this Marshland. Infinity is not awesome, for he lives amidst the most wonderful illustration of it, and so he makes his home, watches his sons grow to manhood, passes evenly along his "little journey," and finally across the horizon to start afresh on the great adventure where mysteries lie unfolded and beautiful in the light of absolute understanding, and where, perhaps, the wonder of the images are real and not will-o'-the-



THE FINISH OF A RACE: A MARSH FIRE, FOR CLEARING AWAY DEAD CANES, BURNING IN THE BACKGROUND, ON THE LEFT.

wisps leading him a weary journey ever to end in disappointment.

Just as character varies, so do the homes of Marshland. Some are of the plainest of plaited reed mats propped up carelessly against a few of these airy delicate canes—fragile houses, unstable, and not even having the saving grace of beauty. Nothing shoddy is beautiful, but when strong work is combined with delicacy of touch, then perfect grace results.

Other houses—nay, mansions would be a more fitting term—are constructed with such genius that the results, compared in contour and symmetry with many a massive stone building, leave the spectator not at

the Marshland houses retain much of the mystery of the grass itself.

Marshland would sadly grieve the heart of a modern garden city maker. There are no straight roads, no rows of similar houses whose only attempt at variance lies in a name—a feeble effort mostly, and never reaching even the borderland of originality—no smug and complacent front plots and discreet and tidy back greens. One company of marsh ladies will view from their front door another company grinding corn and crushing reeds in their back yard, but it does not distress them—they are too busy to spend valuable time in worshipping at the shrine termed “what people might think.”



MARSH GRASS AND PALM TREES, WITH A GRASS HOUSE ON THE LEFT.

all sure that the one of brick and stone has won the prize. Smooth round pillars, at least a foot in diameter, of these reeds bound together, gradually bend inwards till a perfect rounded arch is formed, smooth and strong and dependable, that rivals the arches of a cathedral. With such a foundation to build upon, nothing would seem impossible. Dainty lattice work, open and airy, encloses the sides, letting the breeze pass through on its way, yet effectual in keeping prying eyes from seeing what the lord of the house does not will to be seen. The roof is of such a fine network of many layers of matting that the sun does not force his fierceness into the cool interior, and the rain trickles over the smooth surface and, in the absence of gutters, pours down to the hard-baked ground. Thus do

And, passing from house to house, one might well call this village the place of a thousand isles. Little bridges built of reeds, strong and graceful and picturesque, lead the wayfarer safely across the many waterways which wander in bewildering confusion on their journeys, finally disappearing into the long grass and losing themselves in the river or choosing the path of adventure—short-lived—into the desert.

Marshland contributes its share towards the commerce of the world. River craft stop off at this fairy place to purchase that which is more practical than gossamer, and marsh grassware is found not only in Marshland. Everywhere this matting is in use, and the bellums load up with it and pass on their way to trade with it elsewhere. All is done by

barter, the boats leaving such things as Marshland needs, and taking in exchange a load of their matting. Money for daily use is an unknown quantity. Let us hope these people know what problems they are saved!

Fairyland is the most wonderful and fascinating of all places to visit, but the most impracticable in which to stay. So,

as the sun begins to dip and swift darkness is very near, it is time to slip away.

Two fairy boats, long and slim, with saucy turned-up ends, come racing down the river, the occupants paddling with furious zeal and shouting at the pitch of their voices—a mashoof race. In the distance rises a thick cloud of smoke—a big marsh fire to clear away old dead canes. All along the river bank lies the blue smoke from cooking fires, for the day's work is done, and man must eat before he takes his rest.

Shadowy and queer-shaped tufts of feathery grass add fuel to the fire of imagination, and as the night breeze springs up, the lazy whispering in the



WELL-BUILT GRASS HOUSES, WITH A BRIDGE AND PATHWAY APPROACH.

reeds becomes the excited talk of many voices. The sun drops, and it is a hurry to race away from that land of mysterious shapes and sounds. Faster and faster we go down between the whispering walls and out into the open water of a vast lake, and thus good-bye to Marshland.

The locality of the part described is on the Euphrates River, some sixty miles south of Nasiriyah, which place is 140 miles north-west of Busrah, and used to be the terminus of the railway. Along this stretch of the river the country on either side is cultivated land, but after that comes the vast Hamar Lake, a flooded area in which



ENTRANCE TO THE WOMEN'S QUARTERS.

there is only a narrow channel, difficult to keep open for river craft requiring any depth of water. Then the river closes in, and all ground on either side is marshland. The only piece of raised land is that which is known as the village of Chabaish, the

inhabitants of which live surrounded by swamp. Each small village in this lower Euphrates section is more or less a small community or tribe by itself, but all together may come under some definite tribal name.



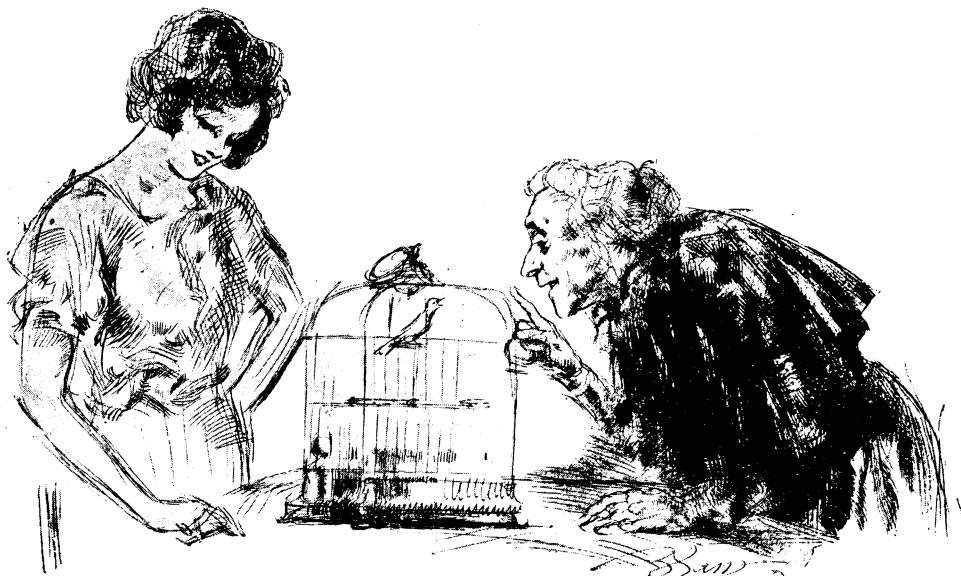
SPRING.

THERE was nothing new,
 Only green below.
 Only blue
 Overhead.
 The old hard road to tread
 The old whitethorns a-blow
 Where the kingcups grow.
 Nothing new. And yet
 All regret
 Melted sudden in the crucible of sky,
 All remorse,
 Buried under pyres of blazing gorse.
 Back went the black curtain. There was hope,
 Scheme and scope—
 Something not yet dead, then? Something deep
 In the earth still striving? Just asleep?
 Not yet dead hope, love and joy and faith?
 Nothing dead but death?

* * * * *

Spring! Spring! Your old resurgent miracle again,
 Ever irresistible and plain!
 Ever illusive, ever vain, vain!

E. NESBIT.



"Tweet-tweet, Mr. Daffodil!"

THE BALL DRESS

By ADELAIDE EDEN PHILLPOTTS

ILLUSTRATED BY EDMUND BLAMPIED

ROMANCE is a kind Spirit who is not embarrassed by the most forbidding door. Close it politely in her face, she will wait till your back is turned, steal in and appear radiantly before you. Shut it sternly on her, she will go round to the window and laugh at you till, exasperated, you admit her. Slam it against her, she will creep in at the keyhole.

One old woman, who dealt unromantically in cast-off clothes, had slammed her door on Romance, but the dear Spirit came in, not at the keyhole, but as you shall learn.

Miss Rebecca Clarke, wardrobe dealer, or old-clothes merchant, as her sign announced, sat one November evening in the parlour of her East London house, poking crumbs into the cage of a pet canary. She was shrunken, thin, wrinkled like frost, and she wore a pile of grey false hair that always slipped sideways over her right ear, and had long ceased to match the white living hair strained off her brow. She was dressed in some of the old clothes of her trade, as

shabby as the shabby room surrounding her, as cold as the cold air she breathed; for, in spite of the season, no fire was lit in the grate.

Beneath this room was Miss Clarke's shop, and here hung her melancholy merchandise—outworn gowns, fog-soiled coats, rain-spotted hats, and every other variety of cast-off apparel—a mass of motley garments—some ready to be sold again, some waiting to be remodelled, some to be ripped up for the sake of the material of which they were made. A gas-jet flickered on the scene and mingled its odour, for it leaked slightly, with the stuffy scent of massed garments. Over this pale point of heat and light crept suddenly two hands, trying to steal for themselves a little warmth out of that vault-like atmosphere; and then among those empty robes moved one in which a living thing was wrapped, whose face was as white and chill as her fingers, who now rubbed her cheeks with the stolen glow till the blood made them pink again. The light twinkled in her eyes and lit up the head

and shoulders of her, revealing a girl, beautiful because of an expression of felicity and compassion that was ever on her countenance, and interesting because of a humorous turn of her mouth.

She glided like a wan ghost among the alleys of clothing, drew down the window shutters, lit a taper at the gas, which she turned low, and left the place to its gloom. Then she ran upstairs to the room above, paused as she heard a voice raised, smiled, and entered.

"Tweet-tweet, Mr. Daffodil! No, no, no! Good little birds don't peck," Miss Clarke was saying to her bird, as her freezing looks melted to a smile; but when she saw the girl coming to her, they froze again.

"No fire!" cried the young woman. "And how I have been looking forward to it down there! I warmed myself by anticipation, and I've had that pleasure, anyhow. . . . Aunt Rebecca, do you know that the old clothes are all huddling together like beggars on cold nights, and the silk petticoats are shuddering like ice in the wind? Oh me, the cold!"

"Fiddlesticks!" grunted Miss Clarke. "If an old woman of eighty can sit here without a fire and snap her thumbs at the temperature, why should a great, strong girl like you feel the cold, Charity? You can't have the oil-stove one hour before December. That's my rule."

"Aunt," said Charity, sighing, "you must be frozen through and through not to feel another's coldness."

Miss Clarke sat up and turned on the girl. "Don't you be pert to me," she began, "because that I won't abide. Where would you be now if it hadn't been for me? Where did you come from? Answer me that."

"From the Foundling Hospital I came, Aunt."

"And who had pity on you and took you away?"

Charity smiled.

"Nobody had pity on me, and Miss Rebecca Clarke took me away."

"And what have I been to you for five-and-twenty years, miss?"

"An adopted aunt," said Charity softly.

"I'm glad you know it. And don't you ever forget what you owe to me."

"Did you call me 'Charity' that I might remember?"

"Ah, you're a sour minx sometimes—a loveless toad. I called you 'Charity' that you might strive to live charitably, which is the most any of us can do in this life."

"Not quite," murmured the other to herself. "Some of us can put up with charity." Whereupon she fetched darning and sat beside the adopted aunt, who froze and thawed as often as she spoke to Charity or smiled at her bird.

"Where is Charles?" Miss Clarke suddenly demanded.

Charity quivered.

"Where, indeed?" she said. "He's gone to that house in the West End where the poor girl died—oh, it's horrible!—to buy up her trousseau before she's been buried a week. Yes, Aunt, she was an orphan. She had a guardian; she was going to be married. . . . And that guardian takes care to inform us that her ward's clothes are 'all in the newest fashion and ought to be worth a lot.' Can you believe it? If the child's mother had been alive, she would have kept everything—laid it in lavender till it was—oh, so old-fashioned!"

Miss Clarke sniffed.

"I wonder you have such a fine opinion of mothers," she began, "after—" and left cruel things unsaid.

"You old devil!" cried Charity in her heart. "Don't you revile my mother," she said aloud. Then her eyes filled quickly with tears. "For I know she cried like April, poor lamb, when she had to abandon me."

"There, there, girl! I dare say you can have some of the trousseau things, if they fit."

This clumsy solace fired Charity afresh.

"I'd rather go naked!" she cried, and Miss Clarke "gave her up as a bad job," as so often she had done before.

Charity softened again, and began to coax.

"Won't you give Charles some new socks?" she said. "Look, Auntie, I've darned these till no sock is left, and now even the darns are wearing away. And the cold! And his chilblains—"

Rebecca seized and examined the forlorn socks.

"Fiddlesticks!" she cried. "These will last another two months at least."

And Charity sighed to herself: "Oh, my poor Charles!"

While the girl thus lamented for him, Charles Templeton was driving from West to East with two trunks which held the trousseau of a dead bride. He, who was now twenty-seven years old, had been orphaned at birth. Then had Miss Clarke, for the sake of her dead sister, adopted the boy and delivered him from the workhouse.

She did it as a duty, not for love, and, by a system of bullying and preaching, had brought up her nephew, first to assist with, and finally to manage, the old-clothes business she in her youth had founded.

Charles reached home and pulled the trunks into a bare room behind the shop, where he left them; then he collected an armful of ledgers and ran upstairs. He was fair and slight, with thin, clear features, of which a long chin was the most remarkable, for it gave strength to an otherwise delicate countenance.

"Good evening to you!" he cried to Miss Clake and Charity, as he set his account books beside the bird-cage, jarring it as he did so.

"You clumsy fool!" grumbled Rebecca. "You did that on purpose. You're both set against my poor bird. . . . Pretty boy! Pretty Mr. Daffodil! Was he frightened by a great, stupid monster, then?"

"I'm sorry," said Charles. "I didn't mean to shake the little fellow."

"Don't add to your wickedness by denying it. I hope I shall find the books correct this evening."

Charles reddened.

"You're too bad, Auntie. I know what you mean. For twenty years you've believed that I would rob you. And have I ever? Have I ever defrauded you of one farthing of your fortune?"

At this reference to her hoarded wealth, Miss Clake glared at her nephew.

"Hold your tongue, you rude scamp!" she whined. "How dare you insult your benefactress so? It's abominable! I'm a poor woman, and you lie when you say I've got a fortune."

Charity pressed the youth's arm and whispered—

"Think it, think it, my dear, but don't vex her any more. She's cross this evening, poor soul."

But Rebecca would not miss an opportunity of eloquent scolding.

"You forget what you owe to me, Master Charles," she began. "Where would you be now if——"

Then Charity interrupted with a smile.

"Aunt, dear Auntie, that's enough. We're horrid, ungrateful little things. We know it."

Rebecca rose and snapped out—

"Fetch my candle!" Whereupon Charity fetched one and lit it; and Youth watched Age pick up her books and bird and hobble to the door.

"Don't waste your time while I check the accounts," she warned them as she disappeared into her own chamber to add up the hebdomadal figures.

"It isn't time we waste in this house—it's life," said Charles; but Charity smiled as she replied: "Poor Aunt!"

"You needn't pity her. Her joy is to bully us. The more unhappy she makes other people the happier is she."

"There must be some good in her, though," said the gentler spirit. "I shall discover it one day. For she loves her bird dearly enough. And, anyhow, I owe her a lot, for often she tells me I should be a servant now but for her."

"Yes. But you're less than a servant here—you're a slave. She adopted us that she might have free labour to run her horrid business—you to be general servant and needlewoman and shop assistant, and I to be book-keeper and buyer. It was all calculated in her nasty little mind twenty and more years ago."

"No, no, Charles," said the just Charity, "I don't believe that. She thought it was her duty—that's all."

"You were born with a kind heart, which always hates to recognise a cruel one."

He looked at Charity's hands and the work in them.

"What are you doing there?" he asked.

"Oh, patching," she replied, lifting her eyebrows and laughing.

"What a sad word, 'patching'!"

"It's the way one lives. Patching clothes to make your money last a bit longer; patching quarrels to make your friendships last a bit longer; patching bodies to make your lives last a bit longer, and so on."

Charles laughed.

"Aunt won't last much longer, anyway, and then we inherit, Charity; and whatever she says, we know that she's made a fortune out of this sordid trade."

Charity laid down her hands and looked at him humorously.

"My poor friend—oh, my poor friend!" she sighed.

"What do you mean?"

"Aunt will tell you this evening. But I will warn you first. She is going to alter her will—she says it has been revealed to her as a duty by Providence. All her money is to go towards building a church for the heathen in Polynesia!"

Charles looked first dismayed; then both of them laughed; but finally he said:

"She's bent on saving her own soul, at any rate."

"Charles," said the girl, "don't let an old, unfortunate woman make you so hard. Think what she's missed!"

"Yes. But think what she's making us miss!" cried the boy, turning his back on her that she might not see his eyes.

"Some people get the best out of life, and others let life get the best out of them, and we're that sort," she answered, as one content.

"Do you call Aunt life?"

"Tut, tut!" said she, pursing her lips.

Charles and Charity loved these evening conversations, and looked forward to them all day long. He pointed out now that the lace at her wrist was torn.

"Another patch, then," laughed she. He called his aunt a brute for making her adopted niece go clad in second-hand garments.

"Oh, Charlie," she cried, "wouldn't it be fun to go to a grand shop and choose a new dress—a fashionable one, a dress of blue silk like spring sky? But some people can't have new things—unless it's a new way of being hurt."

Charity said this to tease Charles, and he rose like a good fish to her fly, vowing he would do he didn't know what if she grew cynical, and looking at her with pain in his face.

"Stupid one," she said. "I was only laughing, trying to cheer you up. People so unfortunate as we are are not cynical. It is the half unfortunate who can afford to be that. The wholly so are just—well, sour, perhaps, like the poor, little, frost-bitten fruits that go bitter before ever they are sweet."

"I'd love to give you something new, Charity," sighed Charles.

"You? Bless you! I want two new things—a new broom and a new name: 'Venom,' 'Spite,' 'Ingratitude,' or something like that for a change."

Charles swore that he could give her a new name any day—a beautiful name.

Then the girl shook herself, straightened her back and said—

"Do you know we're wasting time, Charles? Give me that darn." For he had stolen it from her. Then she took his hand, rescued her work, and threw his hand down again.

"Go and unpack that sad little trousseau," said she, "and never mind about Aunt's will. Some people have only dreams, you know."

"But now I've lost my dream, too."

"Dear, dear!" teased Charity. "Do you know my dream? To be 'Cinderella,' because I'm so fond of dancing. What is yours?"

"To be the Prince in your fairy tale, of course. But a pauper prince——"

"And a plain princess——"

Hereupon Charles rose again.

"You—plain!" And she laughed with delight.

"Come now," she said sternly the next minute. "We mustn't be sentimental. No one in our business can be sentimental, can they?"

"This is not our business—it's Aunt's."

When one's pet desideratum is suddenly snatched out of reach, there are two ways of taking the misfortune: either one chooses another object of longing and forgets the first, or one continues to desire that which is lost, and lo! it becomes ten times more desirable than before.

And that is why Charles, who was of this second way of feeling, sank now on his knees by Charity's side and put his clasped hands timidly on her lap.

"You want a new name," said he.

"Give me a new broom first, my dear. It's more important," she replied, trying to laugh.

"She called you 'Charity.'"

"That I might be charitable."

"But I call you 'Love' because you are lovable."

"No, no, no!"

"Yes! Just Love now, but Love Templeton one day!"

Charity dropped her work and pushed the hair off her forehead.

"My dear," she said. "My very dear!"

"But I'm wicked to have told you now." And he got up, turned his back on her, and stuck his chin in the air. Charity was beside him fast, and cried—

"Can it ever be wicked to love? Oh, don't spoil our happiness, Charles! Call me 'Love' again and again, till it is no more than a silly sound in the air, and the meaning of it is in our hearts. Is this joy?" said she, who had wondered what joy could be. "Yes! And it is like the shining of the sun! I can see it!"

"I see only you," said Charles. "in a white wedding gown."

"A new one?" cried Charity.

"Your eyes are bright, Love."

"Because they are looking into yours."

"Your very mouth opens into the shape

of a heart when you smile, Love, dear Love."

Love put a finger on her lip.

"It will keep tight shut on our secret, though. For if Aunt knew——"

dimness there he saw the reflection of a little witch staring at him with malignant grin. He started, looked behind him, where nothing could be seen, and Charity clasped him, already fearful of his slightest fear.



"Aunt won't last much longer, anyway, and then we inherit, Charity."

Charity leant her head on Charles's shoulder and shut her eyes; but his were wide open, gazing unconsciously into a convex mirror that hung over the mantelpiece, dwarfing the scene it imaged. Suddenly out of the

"What is it, dearest?" she asked.

The witch in the mirror had vanished, and Charles hugged her and laughed.

"I could swear I saw Aunt looking at us just now—at least, the spirit of

Aunt, like a tiny witch. I saw it in the mirror."

They forgot it, and loved one another, using a thousand pretty names, because it was so sweet to speak them aloud for the first time.

Meanwhile their miser-witch stood trembling behind the door, quick thoughts passing in her narrow mind. She had seen the embrace. She hated the lovers for loving, though for some time she had suspected their attachment. Now she resolved they must never wed, because, she told herself, no relation of her respectable family should marry a foundling. But the reason she did not tell herself was that she hated those around her to be happy—happy in spite of her.

As she could not rid herself, for her own sake, of either ward, she determined to make them confess to her this sin of theirs, and extract a promise that love—an emotion she despised—should perish forthwith.

When she re-entered the parlour, the children of her adoption were hard at work: the youth at his papers, the maiden at her patching. Miss Clarke sat by the fireless grate and knitted.

"Charles," she said, "where's the cuttlefish I asked you to get for Mr. Daffodil?"

"I will remember to-morrow, Auntie. I am so sorry I forgot it to-day."

"Forgot, indeed! You did it on purpose, you malicious toad." Her anger thus raised, it was easy to proceed.

"You are two selfish little snakes," she whimpered. "You treat me and my pet like dirt; but I'll spoil your games. I'm not going to stand it any longer. I know what I know."

"Aunt Rebecca, you are cold. Let me light the fire," said Charity.

"Ha!" whined Miss Clarke. "You want to change the subject. I thought so. But had you not better relieve your consciences at once of something that would be well off them before to-night?"

"Whatever do you mean?" asked Charles.

"Secrets I have," said Charity, "but they aren't on my conscience; they're in my mind."

"Oh," snapped her adopted aunt, "but you've no right to keep anything from me. And Providence has punished you for it by revealing your wicked secret to your guardian."

"Providence is mistaken," said Charity, "for I have no wicked secret, nor has Charles."

"Isn't it wicked to make love to one another behind my back? Oh, I know all about it. Providence permitted me to see you, though nobody can say that I spied. Openly I saw it."

"The witch in the mirror," whispered Charles.

"Auntie," said Charity, "people always make love behind other people's backs. It's for themselves alone, isn't it?"

"Are you not ashamed of yourselves, then?" asked Miss Clarke. "For you must know very well that no power on earth will move me to allow such a match. Charity——"

"No more," cried Charles, "for no power on earth shall prevent it. Charity, I'm going to unpack the trunks. We'll talk of this after supper."

"I shall talk of it now; but you go, my dear."

And when Charles had gone Charity talked to Miss Clarke. She coaxed, she implored; she was wise and eloquent; she was passionate and incoherent, but through every change of the girl the old woman remained impassive and firm.

"You shall not marry Charles Templeton. And if you won't give him up I'll turn you penniless into the streets!"

"And you call yourself a Christian! Tut, tut!"

"I shall speak to my nephew this evening," said Rebecca. "And then let us hear no more nonsense, for nothing shall break my resolve."

"Nor alter ours," said Charity to herself.

"I am going to put the soup on now." And Miss Clarke rose. "Think over my words and be reasonable."

Charity watched her depart. Then, as her thoughts leapt back to Charles, he came in, carrying a white ball dress over his arm. It glistened like water under the moon, and Charity, who loved pretty things, smiled on it as a baby on a flower.

"It belonged to that dead girl," he explained. "I suppose she would have danced in it on her honeymoon. Doesn't it look as if it had come out of a fairy nut?"

Charity did not answer, but clasped the gown to her breast and rocked herself gently, as if she nursed a sick child.

"Oh, you darling, whoever you were!" she murmured. "Were you beautiful? Yes! Were you good? Yes, I know it! Were you happy? Pray Heaven you may have been." And her tears fell on the ball dress of the dead bride.

"She was more unfortunate than we are, Charles."

She told him then how obstinate Miss Clarke had been, and Charles wished his aunt were dead.

Rebecca meanwhile was absorbed by the affairs of her adopted ones, and her duty, erstwhile so clear, blurred a little now and again, threatening to change its aspect. She, who was in her fashion just, dared not lie to herself wittingly; so she was relieved when finally her first resolve seemed the righteous one, and vowed again that Charles should never wed her adopted niece.

When she came back to the parlour, Charles was writing business letters, and Charity was darning, with the ball robe resting on her knee. Rebecca shuffled across and would inquisitively have seized the flimsy thing, had not Charity almost pushed her away, and flamed at her with angry words.

"Don't touch it!" she cried. "Don't dare lay a finger on it! It belonged to one who loved."

Miss Clarke was cowed, and shrank mumbling to her corner, avoiding the glare of Charles. She was suddenly afraid of these young ones whom she had forbidden to love each other.

But Charity came over to her and said: "This belonged to the bride whose trousseau you have bought, Aunt Rebecca, before the flowers on her grave are withered. Look at it! Oh, and remember, Auntie, if ever you loved!"

Whereupon she laid the gown upon Miss Clarke's lap, took Charles by the hand, and dragged him out of the room.

Rebecca fingered the ball dress, running it through her hands to test the quality of the material, and, from habit, prying for blemishes, of which there were none. Then she smoothed it out across her knee and sat huddled over it, stroking it now and again, and nodding her head. The supper hour passed. The gas made little sounds. Sometimes the furniture cracked.

* * * * *

When Charles and Charity came back they found Miss Clarke smiling to herself. But, seeing them, she frowned and said:

"Charles, you go out this moment and get the cuttle-fish for Mr. Daffodil. I won't have him kept waiting till to-morrow, poor dumb beast."

"But, Auntie, he isn't dumb!" cried

Charity. "His is the sweetest voice in the house."

"So it is, so it is, girl," assented the old woman, pleased, while Charles, at a sign from Charity, hastened on his errand.

"Now, Charity," began Rebecca, "light the fire."

With great pleasure and some wonder the other did so, as her guardian continued:

"And now—put on this gown."

"Auntie! The ball dress? Me?"

"Do as I tell you. I will be obeyed."

So the girl, puzzled, arrayed herself in the dancing robe of the buried bride, while Miss Clarke walked round her, her false hair sliding from ear to ear as she moved her head this side and that. Then she brought a comb to smooth Charity's locks, found a pair of old satin slippers to deck her feet, and gave her a tarnished fan.

"Auntie," said Charity, with sudden tears, "are you mocking me?"

Hereupon the door opened and Charles came in. Seeing his love like a true princess in her beautiful raiment, her white neck and shoulders, her pretty arms bare, he cried her name and turned for explanation to his aunt.

Charity understood.

"Charles!" she cried, taking the aged one's hand. "Don't you see? This is my dear fairy godmother, who is sending poor Cinderella to the ball!"

"By Jove, Aunt! Do you mean it?" asked he.

"Eh? Eh? None of your sauce, you imps," piped Rebecca, ignoring her nephew. "Fairy godmothers, indeed—always as ugly as sin, with long noses and witches' hats. Be off, both of you, out of my sight; and don't you let him put his paws on that ball dress."

They stared at her like two children, hand clasped in hand.

"And mind this. You ain't going to run away from me when you're man and wife. Make no mistake. That's the condition. Small enough, I'm sure—that you stop with me and go on just as usual as long as I'm in the land of the living. That you've got to swear to."

"We promise, Aunt Rebecca," said Charity.

"God bless you, Aunt Rebecca," added Charles. "We'll never leave you."

And as she looked at them they saw a new thing in her ancient face.

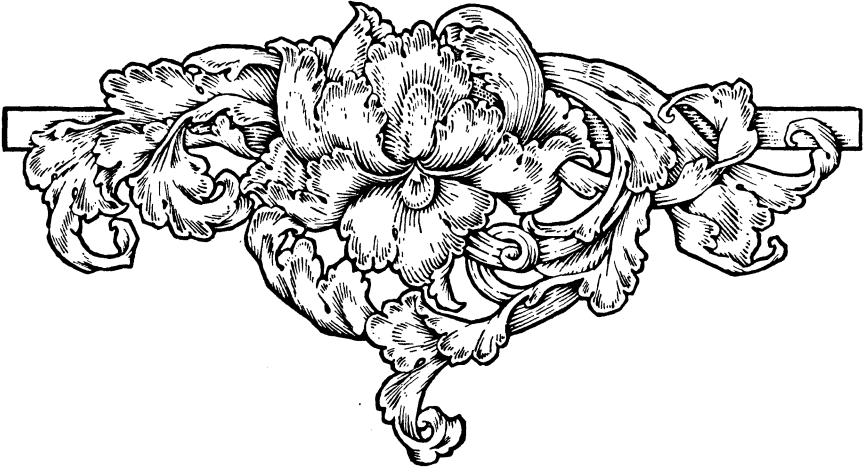
"Go," she said, "and come back in ten minutes to get supper."

They vanished, and Miss Clake turned to her bird.

"Tweet-tweet! You see, Mr. Daffodil, if I give the toads their way they'll work all the better for me while I'm living, and they'll look after you all the kinder when I'm gone. So mayhap it will be best for us both."

Mr. Daffodil pecked the cuttle-fish and applauded her decision. Outside a piano organ broke into its metallic jangle, and a moment later from the passage came the sound of quick feet and laughter.

"Dancing!" said Miss Clake, and she crept to the door, opened it a quarter of an inch, and peeped out.



VAIN QUEST.

SO much of glory have I let go by me,
 So much of beauty have I passed unbowed,
 So blind to all the glory that was nigh me,
 So wrapt in mine own cloud,

Divining nothing of the starry spaces,
 Nor any purpose in time's punctual stream,
 Nor any kindness in poor human faces
 That shone not with my dream.

O heart, O heart, in humbleness resigning,
 Be still awhile, and neither seek nor shun;
 And thou shalt see in human eyes God shining
 As in a pool the sun.

WILFRID THORLEY.

RED PATSIE

By JESSIE POPE

ILLUSTRATED BY G. C. WILMSHURST

RED PATSIE had trudged a heavy five miles before he came to the bungalow on the beach. Every now and then, when the fog drifted apart, glimpses of melancholy, grey sea appeared on his right, and even when the veil closed again, the crash of the breakers kept him on the right course among those interminable sand-dunes.

Red Patsie was fit enough, but five miles of yielding sand will make the fittest man weary. Yet, as he strode sturdily on, there was a good-humoured expression on his frank, freckled face, a twinkle in his keen, grey eyes, for his soul was serene with the satisfaction of another ingenious crime successfully accomplished.

So thick was the mist that, in spite of a subconscious instinct for mileage and locality, his destination loomed before him with such suddenness that he had to pull up short to avoid a collision. The bungalow was built on a cement foundation, without any attempt at fence or garden. It rose suddenly from the sward of the dunes, and if any approach or track led to it at the back, it was hidden by mist.

Whistling softly to himself, he made a careful detour of the deserted abode, peering in at the windows, examining the two doors, back and front. Our hero was always appreciative of his own bright wits, and at this moment he felt particularly pleased with them, for to have walked straight to his unseen goal through strange country, in a thick fog, was no mean achievement.

Entering the bungalow by the scullery window, which he closed and fastened after him, he drew down the light-proof blinds—a relic of air-raid days—switched on his electric torch, and explored the interior. It was, as he expected, a snug abode, comfortably furnished, an up-to-date oil-cooker in the kitchen, while the larder, well and recently stocked, included a bottle of whisky and a couple of flagons of burgundy. Red Patsie's smile broadened. That was indeed a flash of inspiration which had prompted him to

find security for himself and his plunder in his victim's own cosy and sequestered retreat.

Self-satisfaction, however, does not appease a man's hunger, and Red Patsie soon got busy preparing a meal to suit his rather delicate taste, while later, over a cup of exceedingly good coffee and one of his own cigarettes, he reviewed the situation with that sunny self-confidence that was one of his most genial qualities.

Certainly his lucky star had shone radiantly when that week's golf—the only relaxation his profession permitted—resulted in a chance acquaintanceship with Raymond Shoesmith, a short, stocky, and prosperous leather broker, who was filling up time on the Adderstone Links while settling the affairs of a recently deceased relation.

With what a boastful garrulousness that, in the circumstances, was a trifle pathetic, Raymond had babbled on about his uncle's will and the iniquities of the death duties! It was to escape the death duties that the testator had, during his last days, handed over to him, as a private gift, those seven uncut emeralds, which the jubilant Raymond displayed to his golfing partner, not once, but many times. He also added how magnificent they would look on the well-covered neck of his better half, alternately alluded to as "the missus," "the old woman," or, to vary the monotony, "Pinkie," this, apparently, being the good lady's pet name. It appeared "the missus" was a little peeved at his prolonged absence, for the uncle had fallen ill at an inconvenient moment, when the Shoesmiths were about to sojourn at a seaside bungalow on the coast, twenty miles distant. Of this bungalow, which had been put into commission for their visit, Raymond never tired of discoursing—its restful seclusion, its remoteness among the sand-dunes, its sweeping views and health-giving ozone.

Raymond Shoesmith was a bore, whatever subject he touched, and yet Red Patsie showed no mental fatigue; instead, on the links, in the hotel, when they

frequently lunched and dined together, he proved himself to be an accommodating player, an amusing companion, and, above all, a good listener.

And, in the end, what child's play to a skilled artist the annexing of the emeralds had been! There was no necessity even to substitute the duplicates he had prepared in the duplicate wash-leather bag. After the discovery of the loss, also, he had sympathetically assisted in the search—soothed his distracted victim, looked out his train for London, *en route* for Scotland Yard, and had undertaken to dispatch the wire to Mrs. Shoesmith, announcing the catastrophe and instructing her to join her husband in Town.

Red Patsie worked by schedule, and, according to schedule, he should himself have departed from the district a couple of hours later by train for Tidmouth, outside which busy port lay a small but friendly vessel which would take him across to Belgium. Unfortunately for schedule, however, the loquacious Raymond had forgotten, in his worry and flurry, to mention that he had wired to Scotland Yard immediately he discovered his loss. Thus it happened, as Red Patsie strolled back from the station to the hotel, he caught sight of the back view of one of the quickest and quietest detectives he had ever outmanœuvred, in the public telephone call-box in the station yard.

Red Patsie did not return to the hotel, neither did he go by train to Tidmouth. He knew the rapid moves of his opponent, and that by this time conventional means of transit were watched and barred. He just faded away in the mist across country, and, as a result of his sudden inspiration, took two long rides on country motor-buses, taking care to board or alight from neither at their destination, and finally, within sound of the sea, started his long trudge across the sand-dunes, enormously tickled by the notion of lying perdu in his victim's own sanctuary until the hue and cry had spent itself and left him an avenue to escape.

He stretched his long legs luxuriously to the cheery glow of the oil heater, and, taking a small wash-leather bag from his pocket, glanced with contented admiration at the seven large uncut emeralds. With his head on one side, he smiled whimsically at his plunder, replaced them in his pocket, poured himself out a modest nightcap of whisky, and retired to his host's bed, to sleep the sleep of the temporarily secure.

He awoke in the cold, dim dawn from so deep a slumber that, contrary to his custom, it took him some seconds to remember who he was and why he was there. Then, when his grip of things returned, he rose, yawned, indulged in a luxurious and comprehensive stretch, and, approaching the window, drew aside a corner of the blind.

The fog had cleared, the east was all gleamy and pearly, and the sea—a level sheet of grey watered silk—stretched emptily to the horizon. Gently splashing ripples and an almost unbroken line of seaweed left high and dry by the tide were the only tokens of the heavy ground-swell overnight.

Red Patsie was turning from the window for another snooze before breakfast, when an object lying across the line of seaweed caught his attention. Peering forward with a frown, he looked intently, but the light was too dim to make sure. He dropped the corner of the blind and sat down on the side of the bed, cogitating deeply with an expression of annoyance and distaste on his usually good-humoured face. If his sudden suspicions were correct, it would make the situation more difficult and complicated; however, it *might* only be a log of driftwood. Momentarily the light increased, but a quarter of an hour elapsed before once again, and with evident trepidation, he lifted the blind.

This time no doubt was possible; the object was no accumulation of driftwood, but now took the definite and pathetic shape of a human body washed up by the waves and left stranded at high-water mark by the falling tide.

Red Patsie might be a careless, accomplished, happy-go-lucky rascal, but, for all that, he was human, and when a closer view through his field-glasses proved that the poor bit of flotsam, lying so quiet and still, was the body of a woman, he shuddered and turned sick.

"It was probably there when I came last night," he muttered, and then his thoughts turned to the new difficulties that this helpless intruder had introduced into the game. Apart from his natural repugnance, to remain in hiding with such a gruesome companion would burden him with a grave suspicion when the facts became known later. On the other hand, to leave his sanctuary was to walk into the net that was spread over the district.

His brows contracted resentfully. In all these miles of coast-line, why had the

capricious waves chosen that one particular spot to relinquish their prey?

However, he washed, shaved and completed his usual scrupulous toilet, prepared breakfast, and put on the kettle for the coffee. But still, through all these commonplace domestic duties, the picture of that pitiful heap among the seaweed haunted the back of his mind, until, acting on a sudden impulse, he opened the door of the bungalow, looked round over the deserted sand-dunes, and walked across the sand to the helpless cause of his dilemma.

Preparing his rather sensitive soul for a possibly gruesome spectacle, he approached within a few paces, then stopped dead and gazed in amazement.

Outstretched on the sand, her head pillowed on her arm, a loose strand of hair across her cheek, her graceful body nestling into the thick bed of dry seaweed, lay a young and pretty woman, pale, worn, and dishevelled in the cold light of early morning, but sleeping as quietly and peacefully as a baby.

Red Patsie's trained observation gathered in all the details at a glance. She was dressed in a tweed coat and skirt, silk knitted jumper, tartan stockings, and brown brogues. Her close-fitting, pull-on hat had fallen back from her face in her sleep, but fringed gauntlet gloves were on her small hands, and a brown bag lay on the sand at her side.

As he stood looking down at her, she stirred, flung her arm wearily across her face, shifted her position, gave a little petulant grunt, opened her eyes, met his without the slightest astonishment, closed them again, wriggled her shoulders impatiently, sat up suddenly, brushed some sand from her sleeve and skirt, and gazed vacantly out to sea. Then she rubbed her eyes and looked up at him again with a sudden expression of dawning bewilderment.

"Good morning," remarked Red Patsie quietly.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the girl, in a sleepy, fretful tone. "I dreamt I was drowned!"

"And if you continue this mermaid stunt," he observed, in the half-bantering, half-indulgent tone he usually employed to members of the opposite sex, "I should say there is every chance of your dream coming true."

The girl made no reply; she was looking about her in a dazed perplexity.

"What's that place?" she said, indicating the bungalow.

Red Patsie meditated a moment.

"That," he replied, "is the little summer shack I retire to when my fellow-creatures weary me."

She regarded him silently, and, standing there, a tall, vigorous figure in his well-worn but well-cut tweeds, the first slanting shafts of sunshine lighting up his crisp, curling red hair and his well-featured, pleasant face, he *was* good to look at.

"I lost my way," she said simply; "I've been wandering in the fog for ages. I got so utterly fagged that when I caught my foot in the seaweed and fell, I suppose I fainted, or went to sleep, or something—anyhow, I don't remember anything more."

Her voice faltered a little. She passed her hand across her face, then turned her head away. A quick reader of tokens, and not inexperienced in feminine manners and customs, Red Patsie stooped down and put a comforting hand on her shoulder.

"Now, cheer up!" he said briskly. "Nothing to cry about now. A cup of coffee is what you want, and, as luck would have it, I'm just making some. Shall I give you a hand? I dare say you're a bit stiff."

The girl wiped her eyes and sniffed back a little sob of self-pity. Declining his assistance, she tried to rise, but so cramped were her limbs and so stiff her muscles that, if he had not stepped forward and put an arm about her, she would have fallen.

"You feel as if you've got somebody else's feet, eh?" he said in his half-careless, bantering way, as he supported her rather weak progress to the bungalow.

"Yes, and they are several sizes too large," she retorted, smiling pluckily. Then her smile faded, and a shudder went right through her.

"Cold?" said Red Patsie gently, and he took her hands in his warm ones, and at this sign of human sympathy she suddenly began to sob.

"I don't think I shall *ever* get warm again!" she whimpered like a child. "Oh, it was so awful!"

"I know," he said. "But wait till you taste my hot coffee, and I've got such a comfortable chair, and the oil heater is quite a respectable substitute for a fire, and when you feel more yourself you shall tell me all about it."

The kettle was steaming on the stove when he helped her across the threshold and ensconced her in the promised armchair, from which she watched his preparations mechanically, still half dazed and tearful. But the coffee warmed the very cockles of



“His worry over the death duties made him slice his drives.”

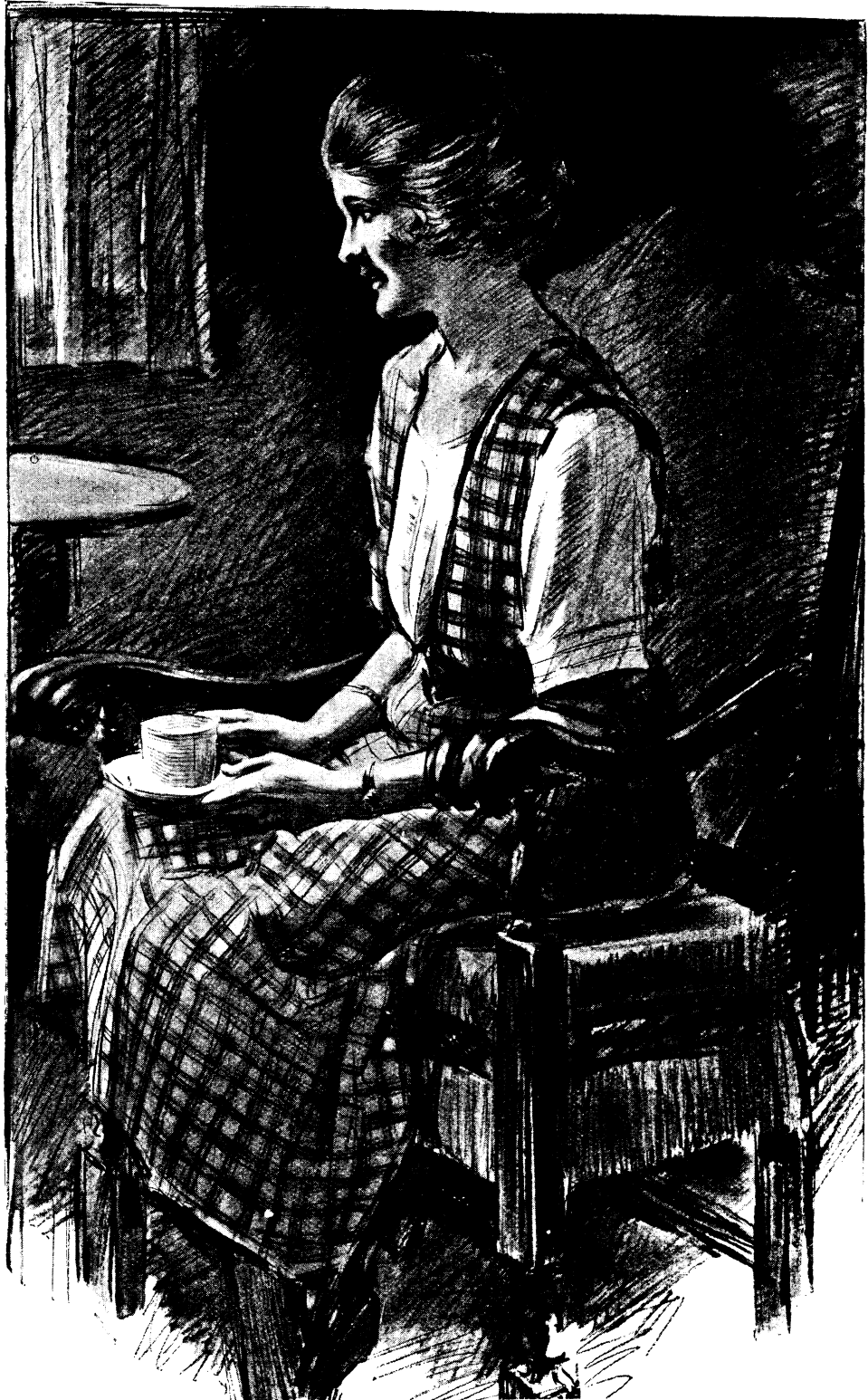
her heart, and gave a tinge of colour to her cheeks, seeing which, he left her to hurry up the breakfast.

As her circulation grew normal, recovery was rapid, and the desire to cry faded before the anxiety to look at herself in the

glass. In fact, the forlorn wayfarer was busily titivating when her host called out cheerily from the kitchen—

“Do you like it hard or soft?”

“Oh, about four minutes. if it is new-laid,” she replied, giving a last pull at a



“‘It *would*!’ said Pinkie, nodding ‘That’s like Raymond—the least thing puts him off his game.’”

refractory curl and returning to her chair in rather a hurry.

"No, I mean the bacon," he called. "Do you like it in a semi-transparent state, or so that it flies over your shoulder when you try to cut it?"

She giggled—her natural gaiety was fast returning, added to a decided spice of interest in her adventure.

"Isn't there a happy medium?" she called back.

"I'll see," he replied, in a preoccupied tone. "But I've had a terrible time with the toast—burnt two lots."

"Oh, do let me come and help," she exclaimed; "I'm all right now, really."

"You stay where you are," he commanded sternly, and in two or three minutes, heralded by a most appetising fragrance, he carried in a dish of bacon and a rack of toast.

"It is a shame to make you work like this," she said, her eyes sparkling; "but it smells glorious, and I was never hungrier in my life."

"Good!" said Red Patsie, smiling at her, and they drew up to the table with a well-established interest in the food and a rapidly increasing one in each other.

"Of course," said Red Patsie, pushing the toast-rack towards her, "these impromptu meetings are very jolly, but unless you tell me about your adventure—and I really think we had better postpone that painful subject till after grub—it leaves one rather at a loss for conversation."

"Oh, I don't know," replied the girl gaily. "When I was young, I remember my stock remark to new acquaintances always used to be: 'Which is your favourite flower?'"

"I decline to say," he replied.

"But why? Haven't you one?"

"Yes," he nodded gravely, filling his coffee cup, "but I don't wish to make the others jealous. Flowers are exceedingly sensitive."

"Vegetables, too?" she giggled.

"Even more so," he returned, "and I never slice a cucumber without feeling relieved that there isn't a Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Vegetables."

"I suppose that is because they bear their sufferings in silence," she retorted merrily.

"Oh, do they?" he replied. "What about bubble and squeak?"

She laughed, and her dancing brown eyes followed him with amusement as, strolling to the window, he examined a dot, which

was rounding the point, through his field-glasses. He stood watching it for a few moments, and then returned to the breakfast table, adding casually:

"And don't forget in future what exquisite agony you inflict on a potato every time you put its eyes out."

"I shan't," she replied, her own sparkling merrily. Then all of a sudden a blank look came into them, and she sat staring in astonishment at the opposite wall.

"What's that?" she ejaculated.

Her host turned and followed her gaze, which was directed to the photograph of a girl in evening-dress whose face and figure were an exact replica of his table companion.

Red Patsie's eyes narrowed. He rose again and carefully examined the photograph, noting the word "Pinkie" written in a bold feminine handwriting across the corner.

"What's that?" she repeated, in scared bewilderment.

"An excellent likeness," he replied calmly, turning round on her with his quizzical smile, "and, though I like you best in your sporting kit, this photograph proves without a shadow of doubt that you are Mrs. Pinkie Shoesmith?"

The girl nodded.

"But I don't understand," she said. "What is my photograph doing in your bungalow? Please explain."

"We will satisfy the amenities first," he said thoughtfully, and, indeed, he was doing a bit of very quick thinking. "Mrs. Shoesmith, may I introduce you to Rufus Pattison?" He bowed with such easy grace that she inclined her head in conventional acknowledgment, becoming more bewildered than ever when the next moment he sank back in his chair and broke into such irresistible laughter that, though ignorant of the joke, Pinkie couldn't repress a sympathetic giggle.

"Sorry," he said breathlessly, "but I'm tickled to death. Poor old Raymond!" And he chuckled again with glee.

"Do you know Raymond?" she said.

"Do I know Raymond?" he replied.

"Do I not? Why, we were in the same house at school, and we've been playing golf together at Adderstone all the week."

"Playing golf!" ejaculated Pinkie. "I thought he was settling his uncle's affairs."

"He managed to do both," replied Red Patsie, "though his worry over the death duties made him slice his drives."

"It would!" said Pinkie, nodding.

"That's like Raymond—the least thing puts him off his game. I guessed something more than *business* was keeping him so long. And there was I, staying with some perfectly impossible people at Tidmouth, till he came to fetch me!"

"Well, he really was busy," said Red Patsie. "He only golfed between-whiles, and he was looking forward with great joy to the bungalow holiday."

"But he wrote saying he was coming *yesterday* to fetch me."

"And wired you in the morning to say it was impossible."

"I never got a wire," replied Pinkie.

"Never got a wire," replied Red Patsie slowly. "He gave it to me to send off after he started for London. Surely I——" He looked suddenly rueful, put his hand in his pocket, and, with a very boyish, shamefaced expression, drew out the telegraph form. "My fault entirely," he said. "I *am* sorry. My only excuse is that I ran across an old chum just outside the station, and the wire completely slipped my memory."

Pinkie read the message and shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, there you are," she said. "As I didn't hear, I thought he might have meant me to meet him at the bungalow, though that wasn't likely, as he'd got it ready as a surprise for me. By the way, I suppose he told you we were on our honeymoon when his uncle died. In any case, as I felt there must be some misunderstanding, I decided to come on my own, because I was absolutely fed up with the Bilsons. So I started off, got lost in the fog, and—you know the rest."

"I think you are a very impetuous young lady," said Red Patsie, smiling. "But it *was* rather foolish of you to spend a night in the seaweed, a stone's throw from home and shelter."

Her brown eyes widened.

"But I don't understand," she said. "Is this Raymond's bungalow? I thought at first it must be; but when you said *you* were the tenant, I expected ours was further along the beach."

"The temporary tenant only," he replied. "There is no other bungalow. Look for yourself."

The front window of the sitting-room commanded a full sweep of the beach on either side, bare of habitation. The sea, now blue and sparkling with sun-spangles, was bare also, with the exception of that dot, now well round the point from Tidmouth,

and growing larger every minute. Red Patsie again scrutinised with his field-glasses, while his companion leaned out of the window and extolled the solitary beauty of the scene.

"Oh, we both love big, bare spaces! Don't you?" she ejaculated.

"Depends on circumstances," replied Red Patsie meditatively. Then, still meditatively, he lighted a cigarette, and, as an after-thought, handed the case to her.

She took one, saying with a little rueful frown:

"But he *did* want to show it me himself. He'd taken *such* pleasure in having it all got ready, and he'll be so disappointed."

"I'm sorry," said Red Patsie, "but really it's a good deal his own fault. If he hadn't been so foolish over the emeralds——"

"Oh, don't talk about the emeralds!" she cried petulantly. "I'm sick of hearing about them. Of course he wanted them for me, but I don't like emeralds. I think they are unlucky."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"They are very fine stones," he said. "But your foolish hubby would go gossiping about them to everybody. He was so criminally careless that if I hadn't stolen them myself, someone else would—sure thing!"

"*You stole them!*" she ejaculated, and Red Patsie laughed, his frank, merry, contagious laugh, and Pinkie smiled again in spite of herself.

"Look here, I'd better tell you all about it," he said. "From our school-days we always played practical jokes on each other. Raymond scored last over the ice-cream in my topper at the Iggulden wedding, so it was my turn. He left these precious emeralds any old where, till I decided to annex them to 'larn' him to be more careful, and also to annex his bungalow, which he had stocked and furnished and left at the mercy of any passing tramp. But I did not know that the gods were in such a high humour as to send along a hostess to entertain me so charmingly." And he chuckled again.

"It *does* serve him right," ejaculated Pinkie; "he is a terribly careless creature. But do you mean you've *really* got the emeralds?"

"I do, right here, while your Raymond went chasing off to Scotland Yard. Mind you, I didn't know it was the end of the honeymoon, or I would have turned that joke down and thought of another

one later on. I'm really sorry." And he looked it.

Pinkie smiled.

"Never mind about that," she said; "you've been awfully kind, particularly as you'd no idea who I was. It will teach him an excellent lesson. Raymond *will* swank so; that's one of the things I've got to break him of. But, poor old thing, is he in London now?"

"No," replied Red Patsie calmly. "At the present moment he is racing, hand over fist, for this very spot in a motor-boat from Tidmouth. Look for yourself."

Pinkie ran to the window and gave a little cry of amazement and delight, for the dot had by this time resolved itself into a speeding motor-boat, with a figure at the tiller which she recognised as her very own man.

"Don't let him see you," said Red Patsie, with a hand on her arm, drawing her away. "We'll finish the joke properly. I meant him to find *me* here, also the emeralds, but we can do much better than that now. Listen!" His grey eyes twinkled with fun. "You must take the emeralds, deal with your grievance as neglected bride in your own inimitable manner, and don't hand them back to him until the emotional moment. I'd love to see his face, but you shall have the stage to yourself for twenty minutes, only you *must* describe it to me afterwards. Do you think you can play the lead?"

"Rather!" said Pinkie, in a sudden flutter of hilarious excitement. "It will teach him that it could never have happened if he'd taken me with him instead of making me go and stay with those awful Bilsons. Trust me to rub it in; then, when he's in a suitably softened condition, I'll produce the emeralds. Where are they?"

"Here," said Red Patsie, placing the wash-leather bag in her hands. "Put them in your pocket. Don't you lose them, and don't bring them out till the right moment." He peeped through the window. "He's just here," he whispered joyously. "I'll pop round at the back and leave the coast clear for you."

A thick-set, dark-haired young man came striding up the beach. He wore tortoiseshell-rimmed glasses and an expression of agitated anxiety. As he approached the front door Pinkie could not resist the temptation of opening it slowly and hiding behind it, and was a little disconcerted to find that, when he discovered her there, he omitted to catch

her in a close embrace, but seemed more annoyed than surprised.

"Well, you've led me a pretty dance," he said, with a half-hearted attempt to conceal his irritation.

"Oh, I like that!" she retorted, immediately up in arms. "You've led *me* a pretty dance, you mean!"

"No, I don't," he said. "I particularly wrote asking you to wait at the Bilsons'. I meant to come yesterday, but, as circumstances prevented it, I sent you a wire. I got no answer, so sent another, reply paid. The Bilsons opened it, and wired you had left for the bungalow. My business in London was very urgent, but I was forced to leave it and come after you. It was absolute *madness* for you to sleep here by yourself!"

"Wait a bit," said Pinkie, "and listen to me. In the first place, I never got your first wire, and, knowing how careless you are, I thought you had muddled things and meant me to meet you here. In any case, I was absolutely fed up with those Bilsons—and in the second place, as it happens, I didn't sleep here at all."

"Then where did you sleep?" he cried, his anxiety reappearing.

"On the beach," she retorted calmly. "Lost my way in the fog, had a perfectly putrid time, went to sleep among the seaweed, and should probably have been drowned if I hadn't been very kindly rescued by your temporary tenant."

"Temporary tenant!" exclaimed Raymond. Then his glance fell on the remains of breakfast laid for two. "Who the devil has been here?" he cried.

Pinkie stuck out her obstinate little chin and shrugged her shoulders.

"Rufus Pattison, whom you played golf with, instead of settling your Uncle Edward's affairs."

Raymond glared and gasped.

"He stayed the night here," she continued calmly, "and found me on the beach this morning, and has been most kind and sympathetic. I like him immensely!"

"I don't know if you are pulling my leg," said Raymond, in a hard, suppressed voice, "but Rufus Pattison is none other than the notorious jewel thief, Red Patsie, and it may interest you to know he's stolen the emeralds."

"Stolen the emeralds!" cried Pinkie, in assumed consternation.

"However," continued Raymond, "every

road in the district is watched. He can't get away."

"Why should he want to?" said Pinkie.

"Because, as I told you, he's stolen the emeralds."

"Rubbish!" replied Pinkie calmly. "He didn't steal them; he only took care of them to teach you a lesson, and came here to give them back to you when you thought fit to return and look after your own property."

Raymond glared at her.

"Where is he?" he said.

"He went out for a stroll to give us time to greet each other after our protracted parting. I expect he thought you would want to kiss me, or something of that sort."

Her husband plunged for the door.

"Where are you going?" she said, catching hold of him.

"To get that rascal and the emeralds!"

"But he hasn't got them," she protested.

"Let go of me, Pinkie!"

"I tell you he hasn't got them!" she insisted, holding him tighter.

"How do you know?"

"Because he's given them to me."

Raymond walked back into the room.

"And if you will calm yourself," she continued, "I'll give them to *you*. Only first I'll take the opportunity of saying you've made a mess of things by your carelessness, and next time you'd better take me with you, for you certainly need looking after."

As she spoke she took the wash-leather bag from the patch pocket of her tweed skirt and laid it on the table with an amused smile of indulgent superiority.

Raymond picked up the bag, opened it, and shook out on the breakfast cloth seven small pieces of common green-bottle glass.

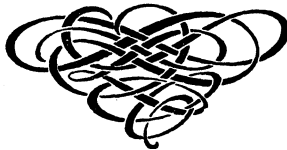
Their eyes met.

"He's had you too, dear," said Raymond quietly, and at that moment the rhythmic throbbing of a motor-boat engine sounded in their ears. They rushed to the window.

The motor-boat was speeding across the sparkling blue ripples, and as they watched. Red Patsie, at the tiller, gave them a cheery wave. Five minutes later he had rounded the point and was lost to view.

"That's the last we shall see of him!" said Raymond.

And it was.



WHEN THEY ARE SINGING.

WHEN they are singing in the fields and forests,
 When even squat small bushes are all ringing,
 And when your heart, for joy, beats loud dong-dinging,
 When they are singing,
 Then comes a moment when, in stealthy quiet,
 You join that riot.

When they are singing in triumphant tree-tops,
 Your voice sounds, too; there you yourself are winging;
 Wild beats your heart, their hearts to yours warm-clinging,
 When they are singing.
 Then? It is over; but you will remember
 All through December.

ETHEL TALBOT.

A RETIREMENT IN GOOD ORDER

By B. A. CLARKE

Author of "A Free Hand," "Minnows and Tritons," "Both Sides of the Road," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY W. HATHERELL

"**G**RAND old boy, isn't he?" said Paul Bewglass, furling the umbrella with which he had protected his father to the cab. "I don't believe he would let anything stop him from going up to Town."

"Why should he, so long as we pay for it? We can't afford it, Paul. You are earning a good income, but we can't afford it. With your father's expensive lunches, his first-class season ticket—that alone is twenty-six pounds—and cabs in wet weather, his mere going up every day costs us a hundred a year. Surely you can suggest his retirement without breaking his heart. After all, there is no practical difference between retiring from business and knowing, as your father must know, that business has receded from him. Why should we impoverish ourselves to sustain a mere fiction?"

"You can't expect *me* to despise fiction. Seriously, Bessie, I can't disillusion the dear old fellow. He would die if he stopped looking for work."

"Or if he found it. I don't believe he has asked anyone for a job for years."

"Well, let things run on as they are for the present. We may not have father with us very long. And now, Bessie, you really must let me get to my novel, or there will be no money for Dad, or for you, or even for myself."

Against her will, his wife smiled at the "even."

"It would be better for me, Paul," she said, "if you were more selfish."

While Paul is cudgelling his Muse—always a reluctant starter—and old George is rolling in guilty splendour to Woodstone Station, there is time for a word of explanation.

Fifteen years before our story begins, the

failure of Wrightson and Wrath threw their old cashier, George Bewglass, upon the world resourceless, and with small chance of ever finding another place. His married son, Paul, an only child, took him in, and humoured the pretence that his father came as a paying guest. But it wasn't altogether pretence. At the end of the month the promised contribution was paid. George had borrowed against his life insurance policy, and continued doing so as long as the company would lend, when he gave up his policy in exchange for its net surrender value. The surrender value of a fully paid-up policy for one thousand pounds on the life of a sexagenarian is a large sum of money—large, that is, for a man who has kept a wife and child on two hundred and fifty pounds a year. It is not surprising that on the strength of it George treated himself to many luxuries, nor that his extravagant habits outlasted the money, it being the nature of money to fly and of habit to remain. But luxuries cannot be bought without money. George was driven to borrowing periodically from his son, to whom he gave as security a quasi legal document of his own drafting, which assigned to "the said Paul Edward Bewglass, hereafter called the creditor, an equal moiety of any income or salary the aforesaid George Bewglass, hereafter called the debtor, may at any future time or times" (the document was stiff with such redundancies) "earn or acquire in any manner whatsoever until the sum or sums advanced by the said creditor, and for which IOUs have been given by the said debtor, have been repaid, plus four per cent. compound interest computed half-yearly."

Paul thought it all a great joke, and so did his wife Bessie; but whereas he liked

jokes, she hated them. It was very serious to the debtor, and he became gravely concerned when, in the course of years, the IOUs totalled thousands of pounds (this included payments for his board, which he made punctually; every Friday night Bessie received towards her housekeeping expenses his IOU for thirty-five shillings), which seemed more than he would live to repay. He met the crisis in two ways—by pushing back the date of his retirement and raising his future salary. Periodically he readjusted his calculations. He did it now *en route* for the station. Whereas he entered the cab a seeker for a situation worth six hundred a year and with twelve years' service ahead of him, he alighted at Woodstone Station a die-hard prepared to continue in harness until ninety-one, whose ripe services demanded not a penny less than seven hundred, income tax paid. "And I hope Bessie will be satisfied now."

Further, to justify himself against sarcasms she had launched at him, he resolved to do what he had never yet done—ask one of his rich Woodstone friends for a job. Originally he had adopted the ten-fifteen for the same reason that he had taken up a first-class season—to get in touch with captains of industry to whom he might offer his services. But the completeness of his success in making friends had defeated the purpose behind it. Because he was a big-headed rufous man, with a blustering joviality that suggested Henry the Eighth (to whom he bore a resemblance), and an explosive impatience of contradiction equally kingly, they had accepted him as someone of importance, and he had not liked to undeceive them. Perhaps at some future time—— But to-day, after fifteen years' procrastination, he would take the plunge.

Walking up the platform, who should take his arm but Sir Isaac Job.

"Well, George, and how is this trade depression hitting you? Are you feeling it like the rest of us?"

"Worse, worse. I am making nothing—literally nothing. I suppose you couldn't find me a job?"

"I am afraid we couldn't afford to make an offer that would tempt you. There are no five-figured salaries in Mark Lane."

George let it go at that. He hadn't the heart to disturb a misjudgment so flattering to him.

"Wonder you come up so regularly,

George, when there is so little to do. I am off to-morrow to Switzerland."

"July is my busy month," said George truthfully.

He made it a point of honour twice a year to go the rounds of all who had known him in his humbler days, his colleagues who had shaken down into various shabby positions, clerks in firms that had done business with Wrightson, and such of his old Highbury neighbours whose City addresses were known to him. They were not nearly so likely as Sir Isaac to be able to help, but there was no embarrassment in addressing them. His first business call to-day was in Coleman Street, upon Sam Hambly, who had started life with him at a warehouse in Fore Street. Sam had never done very much for himself, and secretly George despised him. Sam descended from a high stool, apparently quite unashamed of it (George himself had sat on a high stool, and would again if he ever got a situation, and could find a stool strong enough, for he had put on weight with better living) and, wiping his steel-rimmed spectacles, slowly moved towards the counter.

"Well, George, and what is the good word?" There was no real heartiness in Sam's greeting, and he dismissed his friend—almost hustled him off. "I'll let you know directly I hear of anything, George. I sha'n't forget you. If you don't hear, you needn't bother to look me up, although, of course, I am always glad to have a 'crack' with you over old times" (He hadn't allowed George any chance for reminiscencing.) "I'll drop you a line if there should be anything moving here. At present we are overstaffed. I have your address somewhere. By the way, how is your wife?"

"Jessie died three months before Wrightson's smash. You sent a wreath."

"To be sure, so I did. Sorry to have made such a blunder. Well, so long, George. Be good."

You may be sure he was not more pleased to see the last of George than George was to get away. After an hour and a half of this sort of thing ("Honest Injun," dear reader, could you have stood as much?) our hero was ready for the three-shilling ordinary at Stegall's, which, with a good cigar, restored his self-respect. For the rest of the afternoon he had appointments with Philip and Robert Foulkes (Foulkes, Foulkes and Fellowes, blouse and jumper manufacturers) at the King Street Medina Café. On his way there he determined to

ask Philip for employment, although hitherto he had left his Café circle unsolicited. There would not be the loss of caste involved in applying to one of his Woodstone friends, because in these resorts a man is valued according to his skill at chess, dominoes, and draughts. He ruled out Robert because of his deafness. Circumstances favoured him. Philip had secured a table in the most secluded corner, and had board and men ready. He greeted George with outstretched fists.

"Right or left, Bewglass?"

"Left—I mean right: I mean neither. I say, do you mind my speaking to you on a personal matter? I am going to ask you for employment."

They were still talking at three-fifteen when Robert arrived. Although two years junior to his brother, his deafness made him seem older.

"You are cutting into my time, Philip. I ought not to have been compelled to leave the warehouse before your return. How have your games gone?"

Robert was a dreaming partner, combining a complete dormancy in the firm with the delusion that he directed it. He thought that the warehouse should never be left without either Philip or himself in command. Philip had no illusions. A singular feature of Robert's deafness was that he had no difficulty in hearing his brother, who in speaking to him used his ordinary conversational tone.

"We haven't been playing to-day. Mr. Bewglass has been consulting me upon business. He is out of work, Bob: hasn't a pound he can call his own: has had even to sell his life insurance policy in order to pay his son for board and lodging."

"Dear, dear, dear!" said Robert sympathetically.

"I told him, Bob, we would try to find him something. Bring him back with you after your game. He told me the whole story. It is the most touching thing I have ever heard. He has been out of work for years, and all the time paying the married son with whom he is living thirty-five shillings a week."

"Dreadful, dreadful! But if he has no money and no work, how has he managed to do it?"

"By borrowing from this son, who has secured himself against loss by attaching half his father's future earnings."

"This son must be a perfect Shylock!"

George shook his head and whispered to Philip—

"Please tell your brother that all this was my suggestion. Paul would not have had me pay a penny, but I insisted."

Philip made Robert understand this, and continued—

"That is the kind of man our friend here is. He won't be beholden to anyone. When I think what he has done, and proposes to do, my pride is humbled to the dust. I boast of being in harness at eighty, but do you know what Mr. Bewglass is doing? He has arranged to come up to work every day, wet or fine, until he is ninety-one, as the only way in which he can pay off his indebtedness in full. He would die in the shafts rather than owe a penny. Ninety-one! I tell you, Bob, it makes me proud that I am an Englishman."

"But, Philip, our dear mother was French."

"And mine was Danish," said George.

"Then it makes me proud of being cross bred. Bring him back with you, Bob, and we will introduce him to Walter."

"Philip, you really ought to be getting back. You will see us about four."

It was a few minutes later than that when they reached the warehouse. They took the lift to the second floor, where George was left in Robert's private room while the dreaming partner went off in search of his nephew Walter, now the managing director. As he emerged from his room, he saw Walter and Philip approaching from opposite ends of the passage. The conference was held a little distance from Robert's door, out of speaking range certainly, which satisfied the deaf man, who was not aware of the necessity Walter would be under of shouting. Walter and Philip believed that Mr. Bewglass was in the waiting room on the ground floor. Walter received his uncle's suggestion derisively.

"Can't be done, Uncle Bob!" he shouted. "It—can't—be—done! In the interests of humour, I wish it were possible."

"Eh? Why can't it be done if Philip and I wish it?"

"We have nowhere to berth your *protégé*. The whole building cannot be given over to dormitories—dormitories—places to sleep in."

To make his meaning clearer, he closed his eyes and dropped his head upon his shoulder, although Robert's boiling indignation showed that he had heard.

"We could put him up temporarily with

you or Uncle Philip, but you are both so pernicketty about sleeping alone."

"Confound you, Walter, you are very impertinent!" said Philip. Robert was beyond words.

"Not really, uncle. I wouldn't hurt either of you for worlds. Why shouldn't sleeping partners sleep? It shows they take their duties seriously."

"What a ridiculous boy you are!" said Philip, relaxing despite himself. "Just like your poor father!"

Walter took this as permission to continue. "I like to hear your snores when I come along this passage after tea."

"Why are you all making such a fearful riot?" said Edward Fellowes, emerging from the designing room. "How can you expect me to evolve quiet patterns amid this din?"

"The uncles ask me to take on an old Methuselah who has no qualification except inability to play draughts. If he could play at all, he would beat them and they would both hate him. Ha, ha, ha! He's to start at the lowest rung of the ladder as a sleeping office-boy, and work his way up through the stages of somnolent bookkeeper and somnambulist traveller to the position of sleeping partner. Isn't it a priceless idea?"

Fellowes's laugh was a series of peacock-like screams.

"I can't think what makes you both so idiotic," said Philip. "There is nothing at all ridiculous in the suggestion, or I shouldn't have made it. Mr. Bewglass could be very valuable to us. He tells me he was thirty-five years in his previous place."

"Where probably he was incapable of any duty more onerous than stamping circulars, if he is that pompous booby I've seen you playing with at the King Street Medina. Why, what is he doing up here?" he cried. "Why wasn't he left in the waiting-room downstairs?"

In Robert's doorway George Bewglass confronted them, with bloodshot and protruding eyeballs. His face was purple, and the bald patch on his head. He began to tear at his collar as if it strangled him.

"Mr. Bewglass," cried Philip, "don't take to heart what you have overheard. Think of the unmeant things you have said of people behind their backs. We all do this silly thing at times. My nephew knows nothing whatever to your discredit, do you, Walter? For Heaven's sake, boy, speak quickly and undo your fool's work! Catch him, Fellowes!"

But the designer was too late. George fell heavily to the floor.

The partners did everything possible (Walter was nearly beside himself with remorse), but when you have brought a stroke upon an old man, what can you do for him beyond obtaining medical first-aid and sending him home?

First strokes are light, as a rule, and their effects transient, but this threatened to prove an exception. After a day or two the invalid was up and about, but his right arm was paralysed, and apparently he lacked the power of forming ideas. Mooning about the garden with Bessie pleased him best. He clung to her, but seemed for ever to be begging her to "make it up." That absurd breakfast table skirmish about his cabs—how sharply Bessie regretted it! He would mumble "retire," and nod reassuringly towards her, meaning that she need not fear now that his extravagances would beggar them. Her blindness to his good qualities reproached her. She had not realised that he had any outstanding virtues beyond his punctuality in religious observances, which had made him, to that extent, her ally in the house. But other people had recognised them, the succession of her servants and supernumeraries—they must have, or why had a man so peppery been always popular with them? Yesterday she would have said he had done nothing to deserve this, but now that he was laid aside, and she and Paul had to deputise for him, it was brought home to her that he had done much.

The day after the seizure Mrs. Brock, the charwoman, arrived (Tuesday was her fixed day), and in her voluminous solitary pocket was Jane's school report. Eighteen months before this Jane had won a secondary school scholarship (of course it was his suggestion that she should be entered for it), and ever since Mrs. Brock had always submitted the child's reports to "the old gentleman." And now without him she must make something of such judgments as "has the ability to take a higher place if she worked harder." She wished to be told whether the teacher was praising Jane or "picking at her." The headmistress's footnote was in easy colloquial style that suggested simplicity until one looked deeper: "Jane Brock might have done better, and she might have done worse."

"Well, Mrs. Brock," said Paul, who had been brought in as his father's understudy, "where lies the difficulty?"

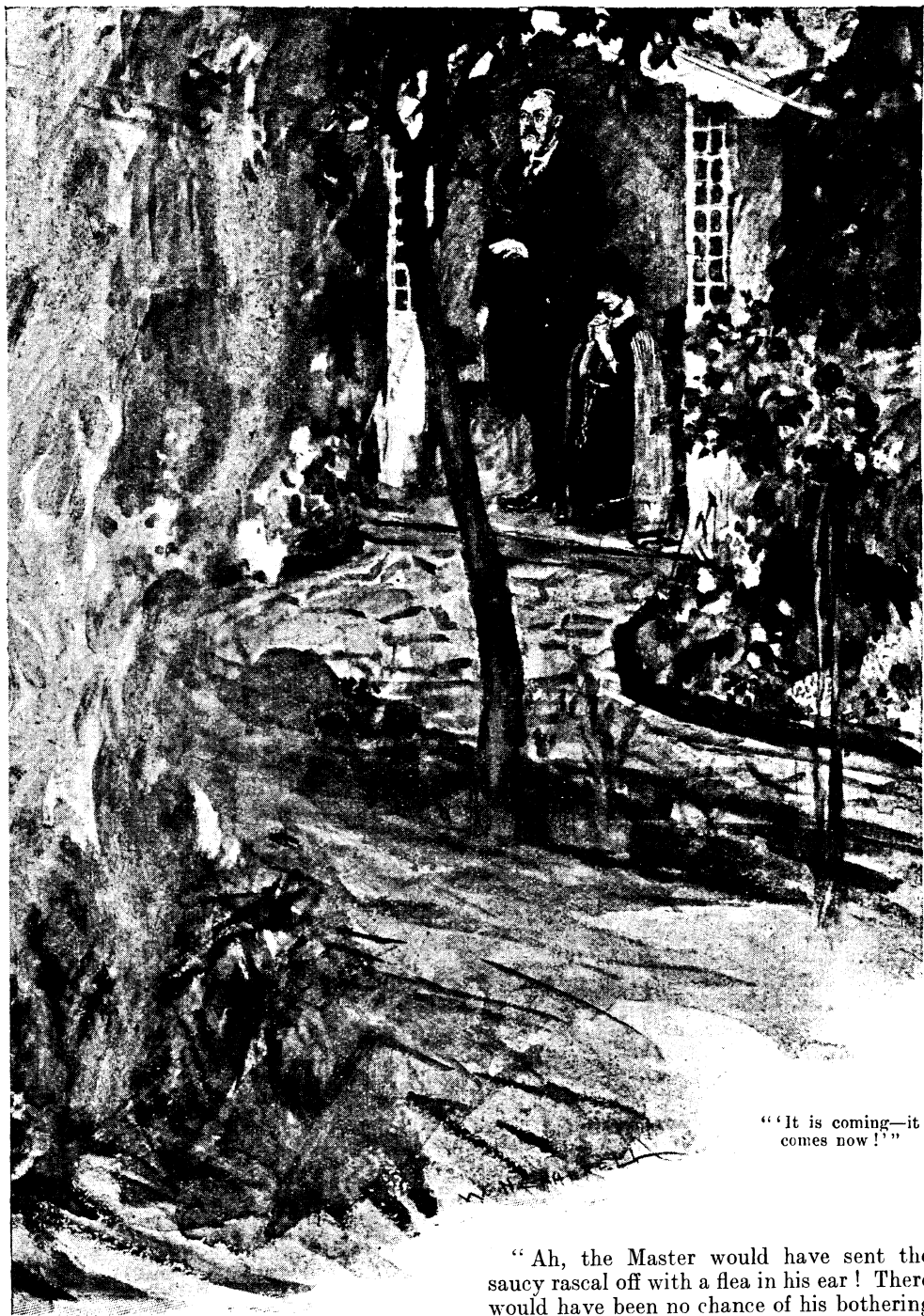


"Through the leaping flames he could see his wife kneeling and his father towering above her."

"Please, Master Paul, Jane says she couldn't possibly have done both."

When Paul had satisfied Mrs. Brock, or, rather, had satisfied her that he couldn't

satisfy her, Phyllis, the housemaid, needed his help. A collector entrenched in the side passage was threatening all kinds of legal and illegal proceedings (mostly illegal) unless



"'It is coming—it comes now!'"

the frightened girl carried out to the letter the provisions of some document he had lately hypnotised her into signing. Paul and Bessie between them compelled the invader to withdraw temporarily, but Cook's comment reached them—perhaps of intention :

"Ah, the Master would have sent the saucy rascal off with a flea in his ear ! There would have been no chance of his bothering you again, Phyllis, if the Master had been himself."

Bessie had forbidden this title being given to the non-paying paying guest, but now the red-eyed staff used it defiantly.

"Heavens," cried Paul in despair, when Bessie for a third time stopped the flow of

his invention, "and we thought Dad did nothing!"

This time it was the baker's man. He was renting a cottage, and wanted Mr. Paul to be his reference, "seeing as how old Mr. Bewglass was ill."

"But I don't know anything about you," objected Paul.

"I thought, perhaps, you might have heard about me from your father."

The stricken man seemed to have been everyone's confidant.

It was easily understood. Having no affairs of his own, there was no self-sacrifice in his interesting himself in those of other people. Yes, one could explain it, but one couldn't explain it *away*. Any idler can give you his time, but sympathy implies a man of good-will.

All kinds of folk came up to inquire, from shop assistants Mr. Bewglass had merely chatted with, to humble sufferers whom he had benefited materially, by obtaining for them surgical aid and convalescent home letters, or votes that had elected their little ones to orphanages.

Bessie felt most remorsefully about her father-in-law when she was getting ready for church on the Sunday morning, because he, and he alone, had accompanied her to church all these years, and when she saw that it disturbed him, her setting off without him, she abandoned the intention, and followed him into the garden and sat with him in the shallow arbour. Most of the gardens were met by the equally long ones of the houses of the road below, but the Bewglasses' and their immediate neighbours' right and left ran down to the asphalted bordering of St. Mark's. The singing, therefore, was plainly audible. Bessie, having her Prayer Book in her hand, followed the service.

The opening hymn suggested something to the invalid, but how much? He was trying—trying to recollect. Bessie took his hand (they had often sat hand in hand in church, the only times they had ever been sympathetic), and now she tried to use this connection to signal a promise of help to the soul sitting in chains in some remote dungeon of the brain. The captive began to signal back. Bessie felt an approaching crisis during the *Te Deum*. It came in that most poignant moment (almost intolerably so to the old) when the prayer for saintliness gives place to a human cry for the preservation of sanity. The old sufferer's face was aglow—the captive soul had burst its bonds and looked from the castle windows. George

put the forefinger of his usable hand upon the words "let me never be confounded," and nodded violently. Bessie fell upon her knees. After many minutes she arose.

"It will come soon, father. You will soon be quite, quite well, but perhaps not to-day, but very soon, I am sure."

With a touch of his old Henry the Eighth impatience, he motioned her down.

Paul was burning a bonfire in the left-hand corner of the garden, and a thin column of smoke rose straight and high in the windless air. Through the leaping flames he could see his wife kneeling and his father towering above her. He thought of a group of statuary. How long did they purpose remaining thus? Well, he must collect some more twigs. Lost in his petty task, he had forgotten them, when there rang out a cry from lips that had been dumb—

"It is coming—it comes now!"

Paul rushed to the arbour, and his father's greeting: "My mind, Paul! I have got back my mind. We *have* trusted in God, Bessie and I. He has unconfounded me, and now He is going to restore to me my writing hand. Look!"

Motionless Paul and Bessie watched the miracle, she still upon her knees, from which she felt powerless to rise, exhausted by her long struggle for faith. The fingers of the right hand closed and unclosed. Next the hand itself began to rise slowly, slowly, until it reached the level of his breast, when the left hand fell upon it, like a man falling upon the neck of a beloved brother whom he has believed to be dead.

Of course, they couldn't continue indefinitely at that high level. The drop came with the appearance in the garden of Dr. Cave. He was greatly pleased at the change in his patient, but not amazed. First strokes were often thrown off suddenly. Perhaps it was more surprising that the effects of this had continued so long. Husband and wife left the doctor alone with his patient, and, having nothing else to do, fed the bonfire.

"It is all right," said Dr. Cave when he joined them. "Your father's recovery is complete. When a man recovers from a stroke, he recovers. You can't believe how hard it is to get relatives to accept this—they push him into bath-chairs when he wants to walk. Ha, ha, ha! But I must hurry along now to the Kiddles'!"

"Then this way out will save you five minutes' walk," said Paul.

The three gardens that abutted upon the church precincts had gates into them.

"I wonder where father has gone?" said Paul, as they relocked the gate.

"I can tell you," said Bessie.

"Where, then?"

"He has gone to the kitchen."

As they approached the house, they could hear the old man describing his experiences to the maids with the vanity of a convalescent child. On the verandah they could hear quite distinctly and catch the girls' comments.

"Didn't it seem very strange, sir," they heard Cook ask, "not being able to lift your right arm?"

"On the contrary, it seemed unaccountable that I *could* use my left. Indeed, it was miraculous; so is all voluntary motion."

"I can't see that, sir."

"Well, how is it done, Cook?"

"I suppose when we want a limb to move, sir, it just moves of itself."

"Not a bit of it. 'In Him we live and move'—not a finger lifts without God's active co-operation—every movement a miracle."

"I can't see it, Phyllis," said Cook, "can you?"

"Not me, but it is nice having the Master talk to us."

"It makes the house a home again," said Cook.

"Aren't they dears?" whispered Bessie.

"I tremble for our dinner," said Paul.

There was nothing amiss with dinner, but Cook burnt the porridge the following morning.

"Ask Cook, please, to make some more," said Mrs. Bewglass, adding, when Phyllis had left the room: "It is a good job that my men don't go to Town."

"When will you be going 'up' again, father?" asked Paul.

"Never. Yesterday I determined to retire."

"Why, father? You soon will be as strong as ever."

"I am that now. I am retiring because you and Bessie don't think the game worth the candle. You feel that you would be better off if I stayed at home. On your honour, Paul, isn't that so?"

"As you put it like that—yes."

"I have my dispatch-box here."

He lifted it from a chair beside him, unlocked it, and took out the deed.

"Under this deed, Paul, you have the power to garnish all my future earnings to the extent of one-half. Do you realise that my retirement makes this valueless?"

"Quite," said Paul, "and this is how to deal with it."

He took the document from his father, tore it into three strips, and threw them into the waste-paper basket. He had consented to the deed being drawn solely to ease his father's mind, and he had always felt ashamed of it.

"These I shall burn in the kitchen grate," Paul said, taking from the dispatch-box the neat IOU bundles, and leaving the room with them.

He returned a minute or so later the poorer by thousands of pounds of paper money.

"That's that," as George Robey says. Dad, you ought to take Bessie up to see him."

"One minute—there is my future to be settled. Having no means or prospects, I cannot continue here as a paying guest. Are you willing for me to remain as your pensioner?"

"Not as that, or any other long, stupid word," said Bessie, "but as Daddy, the one who makes this house home for everyone in it."

"Thank you, Bessie. You have taken the sting out of dependency" (even now he couldn't see that he had been entirely dependent upon them for thirteen years). "But I am going to show you that I can still do something. After breakfast I shall go down to the station, hand in my season ticket and a claim for the unexpired portion. In a few days I shall have five or six pounds to give Bessie towards her housekeeping. Not a bad morning's work, that, for an old 'un?"

About eleven he started off in the best spirits, delighted to think that, despite his now being out of harness, he could still bring grist to the mill. Nevertheless, he had a dreadful sense of loss when the ticket was given up. For nearly sixty years he had been a season ticket holder, and now he was without that visible tie with the world's centre. He turned his face up the Brighton road, but his hand kept straying to his empty ticket pocket, as the tongue will to the gap left by a recently extracted tooth. Then he retraced his steps, and, passing the station, sought the first stationer's.

"I want a piece of stiff cardboard," he said, "that won't buckle up. No, no, my good girl, not a great sheet like that—quite a small piece will do. Let me see—well, say, roughly, the size of a London Brighton season ticket."



"The Duke turned and tendered the umbrella to its owner."

THE DUKE AND THE DAMOSEL

By K. R. G. BROWNE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

IT was said of the Duke by those who did not know him, or who knew only that aspect of him which he presented to those who came in search of favours, that he had no friends; that he was by nature hard and ungracious; that his behaviour revealed an eccentricity bordering almost upon insanity.

In all this there was just that seasoning of truth which can render such misstatements more misleading than the subtlest lie. It is true that the Duke had but few friends of the monocled, Mayfair brand, yet not one of his tenants or dependents but

would cheerfully have died for him. Hard and ungracious, also, he indubitably was—to all who attempted to make use of him to their own advantage. As to his eccentricity, to whom, if not to a duke, may such a foible be permitted?

Furthermore, that which is eccentricity in a duke may well be common-sense in a farm-labourer. The Duke's originality (let us call it that) took the form of an affection for antique and shabby clothing and a habit of walking about among his tenants as if he himself were one of them—as, in spirit, he was—a habit which endeared him

to the said tenancy and confounded a certain Communist agitator who, having inveighed for the period of one hour by the clock against the Duke and all his works, was considerably disconcerted subsequently to learn that the short, elderly person in the battered cap who had occupied a prominent position in the front row of the audience, and had applauded with evident enthusiasm, was none other than the execrated nobleman himself.

The Duke was no lover of publicity. No society paper published his photographs with appropriately fulsome letterpress beneath; no gilded and ostentatious charity enriched its list of patrons with his name. The Duke, who held powerful views on almost everything, conceived and carried out his good works and his kindly deeds after a fashion peculiarly his own. In evidence whereof may be adduced the incident of the lady and the umbrella.

The Duke was taking his homeward way one sunny afternoon along a narrow, high-hedged lane that formed the eastern boundary of his park, when, from a clear sky and without warning, the umbrella descended upon his head. Thence it ricocheted to the road and there lay, its bright handle winking up at him sardonically.

The Duke, whom nothing ever startled or perturbed, halted and regarded this phenomenon. It was, he saw, a feminine umbrella of expensive workmanship, embellished with a silver handle which the maker, ambitious soul, had endeavoured to carve into the semblance of a parrot's head. Though in this he had been handicapped by a lack of knowledge of his subject, the result was not wholly inartistic.

While yet the Duke remained absorbed in contemplation of this peculiar apparition, he became aware of a voice which hailed him from above—a pleasing, gentle voice, as feminine as the umbrella.

"Oh," said the Voice, "I'm so sorry!"

The Duke glanced up. Close at hand—within his own park, in fact—an oak of incredible age and diameter cast a shade across the lane. A limb of this venerable tree, growing outwards from the parent body, provided a species of extremely rustic seat some ten feet or so above the ground. Upon this limb, and surveying the Duke with an expression of the gravest solicitude, sat a young lady. The Duke, who, for all his retiring ways, knew something of such matters, observed with approval that she was of a remarkable

comeliness and attired not only with taste, but with discretion.

"I hope it didn't hurt you," said the young lady.

The Duke removed his cap and carefully felt the top of his head.

"The injury," he replied, "if any, must be internal."

"It slipped out of my hand," explained the young lady.

"I am glad," said the Duke, "to have your assurance that the assault was not premeditated. Allow me." He stooped and gathered up the parrot-headed thing.

"I'm coming down now," said the young lady.

The Duke heard a swift, scrambling rush, a sliding of feet down the bank at the roadside, and the young lady of the tree stood before him, smiling with a touch of embarrassment.

The Duke bowed and tendered the umbrella to its owner. Viewing her thus at close quarters, he noted that she was even more comely than he had at first supposed. He perceived that her nose, which was both small and shapely, had freckles upon it, and he was glad. Even in Debrecht may be found admirers of freckles.

The young lady, for her part, saw a short, thick-set, elderly individual with a penetrating grey eye and a chin of the shape which is popularly supposed to indicate force of character, and frequently (though not in this case) indicates nothing of the kind. She remarked also a tweed coat whose date of origin had long since passed into obscurity, corduroy riding-breeches and leather leggings polished by the ages to an agreeable mahogany. She began curiously to feel as if she had known this person for years, an effect produced by the Duke upon most of those who encountered him.

"Can you tell me the time, please?" she asked.

The Duke inspected the sun.

"Four o'clock, or near enough."

"Thank you. How far is it to Cheaping Admiral?"

"As the crow flies, one mile. As the human walks, two."

"I see," said the young lady. "Oh, by the way, I do hope I wasn't trespassing in there."

"As a matter of fact," returned the Duke, "you were."

"Oh! Then——" She meditated. "Why, of course, that land must belong to the Duke! Doesn't it?"

"It belongs to a duke, certainly."

"Then," said the young lady, "I am glad he didn't catch me up his tree!"

"Why?" asked the Duke.

"Because I imagine he'd have been rather unpleasant about it."

"Oh, I don't think so," said the Duke.

"Not unpleasant, exactly."

"Is he a friend of yours, then?"

"Hardly a friend," said the Duke. "No, I couldn't call him that."

"But you know him?"

"Oh, yes. Not as well as I should like to, though."

"Is he really an old beast?" demanded the young lady, with staggering unexpectedness.

The Duke looked at her mildly.

"One moment," he said. "I see that this conversation is going to be much deeper than I thought. If you are walking to Cheaping Admiral, we might thrash it out as we go."

Side by side they moved off down the lane.

"Now," observed the Duke, "what was it you said? A beast? What makes you think he's that?"

"I have my reasons," responded the young lady obscurely. "But I want to know what *you* think of him."

"He and I," said the Duke carefully, "have always got along pretty well together. Sometimes I think he's the very devil of a good fellow. That is usually after dinner. At other times I find myself wondering why he was ever created."

"Is he an old man?"

"Old? Not at all. In the prime of life. No older than myself, in fact."

"I see," said the young lady thoughtfully. "Somehow I thought of him as rather a horrible old man with yellow teeth."

The Duke halted in the road and stared at her.

"Now what on earth put that into your head?"

"Oh, I just imagined it."

"Your imagination," said the Duke a trifle grimly, "is of an unusually powerful variety. You are not a Socialist, by any chance?"

The young lady smiled at him in a most disarming manner.

"Oh, no."

"Are you contemplating writing the ducal biography?"

She laughed delightfully.

"I'm just—interested in him."

"Your interest," said the Duke, "has a slightly hostile flavour. Have you taken any other—ah—opinions on the subject?"

The young lady made a vague gesture of impatience.

"I've spoken of him in the village, of course, but everybody there seems absolutely infatuated with him. They seem to think he's a kind of demi-god."

"That," said the Duke gravely, "is unfortunate. You, I take it, do not share that belief."

"No," answered the young lady crisply, "I do not."

"This is all most interesting," said the Duke. He stopped and pointed. "By the way, I live here. It would honour me very greatly if you would take tea with a man old enough to be your *fiancé's* father."

The young lady started; her attractive countenance took on a faint tinge of pink.

"How did you know I have a *fiancé*?"

"Surely," said the Duke, bowing slightly, "that was inevitable, even—"

She swept him a little curtsey.

"Thank you, sir."

"—even," pursued the Duke placidly, "if I had not noticed the ring under your glove. Now, touching this matter of tea?"

"I should be very glad of it, though I'm afraid I couldn't possibly describe my *fiancé's* father as being 'in the prime of life.'"

"*Touché*," said the Duke, and held open a white gate.

Beyond the gate a narrow drive led to a long, low house of mellow brick, red-roofed and many-windowed. On the close-cut lawn before the door a bull-terrier slumbered in the sun, completely careless of the pigeons walking about and occasionally over him. The house, though one to cause a surge of envy in the breast of any ordinary man, was not of the type normally associated with noblemen of high degree. It was, in fact, the Dower House, where, at such times as the gaunt castle on the near-by hill was empty of relatives or guests, the Duke preferred to live in a state of almost rustic simplicity.

He led the young lady to the porch and there paused.

"Names," he remarked, "do not matter very much, but still—Yours I should think—yes, I should think you ought to be called Margaret."

The young lady started again and stared at him.

"Good gracious!" she cried. "Where is your sugar-loaf hat and your dressing-gown with stars on it? My name is Margaret. How did you know, wizard?"

"Instinct," explained the Duke, opening the door.

"Very well," said the young lady firmly, as she stepped across the threshold. "Then I think—no, I'm sure—your name is John."

"Now, that," said the Duke, "is very remarkable, because my name is John. How did you know?"

"Instinct," replied the young lady sweetly. And they left it at that.

They took their tea in the square, oak-panelled hall, tended only by an unbelievably old woman with a face like a wrinkled apple. It was a very good tea, and the Duke was pleased to observe that the young lady's appetite was almost as sturdy as his own, which was a very sturdy appetite indeed. When they had finished, he looked at her across the little table.

"Now," he said, "about this Duke of yours. I'd like to hear what he has done to you. Being almost a friend of his, I might be able to help a little."

The young lady studied him for a moment in silence. Then she leaned forward earnestly.

"I want your advice," she said.

The Duke nodded. It was no new experience for him to be asked for advice on the strength of five minutes' acquaintance; he was that kind of man.

"Such as it is," he said, "it's yours."

The young lady hesitated for a moment, and then went on with a rush.

"It's about my *fiancé*. When he came out of the Army after the War, he couldn't find a job. He hadn't had any particular training, and nobody wanted him. You know what it was like at that time. He had a horrible time, poor boy. At last someone offered him a position—a temporary one. He was awfully glad to take it, of course, but he could only regard it as a temporary one because—well, because of me, chiefly. The arrangement was that when he found a better job, he was to be allowed to go to it. That was over two years ago. Since then Ji—my *fiancé* has twice been offered other positions with better prospects, but his employer wouldn't let him go—said he needed him. A week ago he was offered another job that seemed ever so much better, but the same thing happened. His employer said he needed him too much."

"Pardon me," said the Duke, "but I don't quite understand one point. If there was no kind of contract in the first place, and if this employer is such a tyrant, why doesn't your *fiancé* simply walk out of the house? As far as I can see, there's nothing to stop him."

"That's what I suggested. But he won't. He says this man was the only one who gave him any sort of a chance, and has treated him very decently ever since—except on these occasions—so he won't go while he's needed and without permission."

"A very creditable sentiment," said the Duke. "Then I take it he does not actually dislike his present employment or his present employer except on these special grounds?"

"Oh, no. He's very fond of both, I know. But—but—well, you see, we—we thought of getting married, and as things are——"

"Has he mentioned that to the tyrant?"

"No. He says it would be like forcing his employer to let him go, and he won't do that, because he owes the man such a lot and must give him a square deal. That's a typically masculine argument, isn't it?" she added suddenly.

"Possibly," agreed the Duke. "It's not such a bad one, though. Well, what sort of advice do you want?"

"I want to know what I can do about it. You see, it seems to me rather—well, selfish to keep Ji—my *fiancé* from a better job. And it makes him seem as if he preferred his employer to—to me."

There ensued a pause, while the Duke gazed absently through the window. Suddenly he turned to her.

"In that corner," he said briskly, "you will observe a screen of Japanese design and execution. Will you oblige me by taking cover behind it until I call?"

She stared at him.

"What——"

"Please. I won't keep you there long. But I may be able to help, and I like to do things in my own way."

The young lady hesitated, seemed about to speak, changed her mind, nodded and walked across the room. When she was hidden from sight, the Duke rang the bell. In less than two minutes there appeared in the doorway a tall, powerful-looking young man with red hair and a determined expression.

"You wanted me, sir?" he asked.

"I did," said the Duke. "You have not,



"For the moment she paid no attention to him. She ran to the Duke."

I suppose, changed your views about the position that Van Reyden offered you last week?"

The young man started very slightly.

"Well, no, sir. But I understood you——"

"Have you seen the evening papers yet?"

"No."

"Then you are not aware that Van Reyden, finding himself on the point of arrest for frauds amounting to about four million, shot himself this morning?"

Had the young man not been so utterly

taken aback by this item of news, he might have heard what sounded like a gasp from behind the screen in the corner.

"Great Scott!" he said. "So that was why you wouldn't—you mean you knew all the time, sir?"

"I did not *know*. I suspected. Have you ever reflected on the fact that Anderson and Schenk both went bankrupt not long after they offered you positions in their respective offices?"

The young man stared at him in a somewhat dazed manner.



"Margaret!"

"By Jove, sir," he said slowly, "I think I see now why you——"

"Anderson, Schenk, and Van Reyden," pursued the Duke pleasantly, "all made the mistake of supposing that because a man is a duke it necessarily follows that he is a fool in financial matters. When they discovered that this is not invariably the case, it occurred to them that, failing anybody

else, the said Duke's private secretary, even if he knew little of his employer's financial amusements, might be of some value to them. *That* was why I said I needed you. It would have been a feeble kindness on my part to hand you over to criminals—for they *were* criminals, all three of them—whom I proposed to smash, and did smash very shortly afterwards. But as I could

not have proved at the time that they were criminals, I could not explain to you. Nor could I give you a better position myself until I was quite confident that you could hold it. I may say that I am quite confident now. Margaret!" he added abruptly.

The young man uttered a faint gurgling noise and fell back, gaping, as the young lady emerged from behind the screen. But for the moment she paid no attention to him. She ran to the Duke and seized his hand in both of hers.

"Oh, what must you think of me?" she cried. "I'm a beast and a pig and an ungrateful, suspicious little horror!"

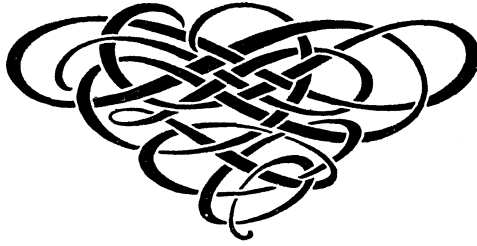
"Not at all," said the Duke. "Your anxiety was very natural."

"But——" she began, and then faltered. "I—I—that's not the worst of it! I—I

deliberately deceived you this afternoon. I knew who you were all the time—Jimmy's often described you and shown me photographs of you. I was waiting for you, and I dropped the—the umbrella on purpose! I wanted to find out something about you, and then—oh, I *am* a little idiot!"

The Duke looked up at the young man with a facial gesture which in one of a lower social order might almost have been described as a wink.

"If you are," he said, "which I do not for a moment admit, then the idiocy is mutual. Your photograph has occupied a suitably prominent position on your Jimmy's desk these eighteen months, and has been greatly admired by me. Now, if you will both excuse me, it is time for me to go and feed the pigeons."



THE LAMP.

OFTEN I waken in the desolate night
 And see a crystal lamp above my head
 Shimmering with silver radiance till my bed
 Laughs like a star with iridescent light;
 And then my soul ascends the Joyous Height,
 Ascends with song, even yet once more being led
 Out of the marshland where the rose is red
 To the upland meadow where the rose is white.

Then I remember, and the lamp goes out:
 As in a sealed and ancient sepulchre
 The kindled cruse of alabaster, set
 Beside some buried queen with rites devout,
 Flickers among the treasure and the myrrh,
 And gutters o'er a golden amulet.

WALLACE B. NICHOLS.



"They stopped to look up and down eagerly. Each dirty, dilapidated house was familiar. They gazed about them with reverence."

TRYING BACK

By BRANDON FLEMING

ILLUSTRATED BY EMILE VERPILLEUX

MONSIEUR GUSTAVE PICOT, who fancied himself an author, and Monsieur Gervase de Wisel, who imagined himself a musician, divided the tenancy of an attic in the most dilapidated house in the Rue Durantin, of which the rent was appallingly in arrears.

The musician, returning one evening after a day that had contained even more than the usual number of rebuffs, found the author indulging in the unwonted luxury of a cigarette, which he had picked up on the stairs.

"*Ma foi*," exclaimed De Wisel, "what has happened? Did you sell your new story to the editor of *La Page*?"

The author obtained a few extra whiffs from the extreme end of the cigarette by sticking it on a pin.

"Gervase, I did not. The editor insulted me. *Mon Dieu*, there is no accounting for the intelligence of some! Did Mademoiselle Delphine accept your new song?"

The musician bristled with indignation.

"She did not, Gustave, and she was exceedingly offensive."

Lying on the bed, the author complained forcibly and at length of the want of perception which denied the merits of his compositions. The musician, maintaining his balance on a rickety chair, no less forcibly execrated the failure of the musical world to detect the value of his inspirations. As want of breath imposed a pause, the door opened, and a remarkably pretty girl came in with a tray. The musician jumped from his chair like a rocket. The author bounced off the bed.

"Suzanne! Little Suzanne!"

"Catch hold," she said. "It's all I can do to-night. Madame Bisson has locked the cupboard. She would be furious if she knew."

They kissed her in turn, and made short work of the cold meat. There would have been many hungry nights but for soft-hearted little Suzanne, who smuggled up provisions, and thought that good old madame the *concierge* did not know.

When they had finished, the author flung himself again on the bed.

"Gervase, it is unbearable. When will the world recognise genius?"

He raised himself and shook his fist.

"*Ma foi*, how I long for success—for fame! I would give years of my life for it—years and years!"

"And I," declared the musician.

"Think of it! To have two meals every day!"

"Don't, Gustave. It is too much even to imagine."

"To be photographed in the streets, and have one's doings published in the papers."

"To be stopped by pretty girls and asked for one's autograph. *Mon Dieu!*"

"Fame!" cried the author, to the elements.

"Fame!" echoed the musician, to the same source.

* * * * *

At the bottom of the Faubourg Montmartre, one warm autumn afternoon, two gentlemen alighted from a luxurious motor-car and proceeded onwards on foot in a curiously furtive manner, as if wishing to escape attention. Both were well-dressed, somewhat stout, and carried themselves with the confidence of successful men of the world. They walked on in silence for some minutes, glancing about them with interest. Presently the elder, and slightly stouter of the two, touched his companion's arm.

"Gustave, it seems strange that we have not suggested visiting the old scenes before."

The other nodded, pausing to glance at the name above the door of a small *café* they were passing.

"It does, Gervase. The idea used to occur to me at first, but somehow I always resisted it. And since then I have never seemed to have time."

"Nor I," admitted the musician. He broke off to indicate a building across the street. "Look! The old *Théâtre des*

Fleurs, where my first song was sung. It seems but yesterday."

"And see, Gervase, the offices of *La Page*, where my stories used to be refused. To think of it—*my* stories refused!"

They laughed together. Then the author quickened his pace suddenly.

"*Peste!* There is a man pointing a camera at us! Cannot one even walk along a street without attracting attention? *Diable!* It will be in all the papers to-morrow morning that we were seen together here, of all places. Can one never do anything without publicity? It is intolerable! What is the matter now?"

The musician was speaking to someone at his elbow.

"No, no, mademoiselle, I cannot give you my autograph. I make it a rule never to do so. If I did, I should be signing my name all day. Come along, Gustave."

They hurried on. The author glanced behind.

"She was a pretty girl, Gervase."

"They always are, Gustave. No girl who is not could ever be a successful autograph huntress. But I do not see why they should take advantage of their good looks to worry me."

"The offices of *Le Livre Bleu!*" exclaimed the author. "How many times I have been insulted inside that doorway! I would like to go in, Gervase."

The musician took his arm firmly.

"You could not think of such a thing, Gustave. It is a sensational weekly. We must not be foolish."

"The old *Café Poudron!*" cried the author, as they approached a corner. "Gervase, do you remember how we used—"

He stopped, looking up above the dirty windows of the *café*. For a moment neither moved. When the musician spoke, there was a new note in his voice.

"There is another name, Gustave. It is not the *Café Poudron* now."

They went on without another word, and their faces were not quite so bright as before.

"In a moment," said the musician, "we shall come to the *Théâtre des Mimiques*, where all my first tunes were rejected. I can remember every inch of it."

"How we used to beg for seats," exclaimed the author, "and how the manager used to curse me when I pestered him with my earliest dramatic efforts!"

They brightened again.

"It is just round here, Gustave. Why, it seems only——"

Once more they stopped dead.

"Gervase!"

"Gustave! I would have taken my oath that it stood exactly on that spot."

"I also," affirmed the author.

The musician stopped a small boy who was passing.

"Les Mimiques, monsieur? I have never heard of it. There is no such place here."

"This is amazing," declared the musician blankly. "What can have happened, Gustave?"

The author turned into a shop.

"Théâtre des Mimiques, monsieur? It has been pulled down these five years. There is a new one now in the Boulevard Roch——"

They waited to hear no more. In the street they walked on slowly.

"Gustave, we must remember it is twenty years ago."

"Yes, yes, Gervase, we must remember that."

Their faces were clouded. Some of the spring had gone from their steps. They looked older.

"Gustave, I wish we had come before."

"Yes, Gervase."

They came to the Place des Abbesses and paused to gaze round, brightening with relief.

"It is the same as ever!" the musician cried. "There is no change here, Gustave."

They reached a small second-hand clothes shop, and laughed happily.

"Monsieur Sarset," exclaimed the author, "where we used to hire our dress-suits for special occasions. Let us go in and see him."

They entered. An old man, very stout, came forward slowly, peering at them through powerful glasses. The change was great, but they recognised him enthusiastically.

"Monsieur Sarset! Monsieur Sarset! Do you not remember us?"

Monsieur Sarset blinked up at them wonderingly.

"Messieurs are very kind. What can I have the honour to do for them?"

They drew back slightly.

"Have you forgotten Gervase de Wisel, who owed you the longest bill in Montmartre?"

"And Gustave Picot, who once ruined your best dress-suit?"

Their voices dropped before that helpless blink.

"Messieurs will forgive me. My memory is not what it was. Messieurs must be referring to a long time ago."

The answer came after a pause—

"Ah, yes—to twenty years ago."

A smile broke over Monsieur Sarset's face.

"Messieurs must not expect me to go back so far as that, at my age. But I am happy that they should have remembered me."

The little shop seemed suddenly to have become gloomy and empty, the piles of second-hand clothes merged in a mist. The stout figure of the old proprietor, whom even the fame of the names he had heard had not reached, faded into shadow. They murmured a few conventional words and passed out.

The author's voice was strangely husky. He seemed to be replying to an unspoken reproof.

"Gervase, it is our own fault. We should have come before. It is too late now."

"Yes, Gustave, too late now. Almost I wish we had not come."

The author pressed him on.

"We have started, Gervase. Let us finish. See, here is the Rue Durantin. *Ma foi*, to see it again!"

They crossed the Place des Abbesses slowly. Neither spoke until the Rue Durantin stretched up before them. Then again their faces cleared. Memories, long forgotten, returned to life. They stopped to look up and down eagerly. Each dirty, dilapidated house was familiar. They gazed about them with reverence.

"Gustave, it is still the same. Just as dirty and as wretched. *Le bon Dieu* be thanked, it is just as dirty!"

Their spirits had risen. They moved on, pointing out each remembered item as they passed. And the house they stopped at was still the dirtiest and most dilapidated of all. How glad they were of that!

"It seems as if we had never left it," the author declared. "I can remember that very broken pane. What will Madame Bisson say when she sees us? Dear old Madame Bisson, who used to feign ignorance of our depredations on her larder!"

They went in. The *concierge* was sitting behind a dirty pane of glass, and the author pounced down upon her without ceremony.

"Madame Bisson! Madame Bisson!"

There was a startled exclamation. The

conciierge sprang to her feet, regarding them with amazement.

"Messieurs, who are you who ask for Madame Bisson?"

They stood very still, murmuring apologies.

"Madame, excuse us. We expected to find Madame Bisson."

They turned their faces away and stood bare-headed. Good, kind-hearted Madame Bisson dead! They had never thought of that. Yet, of course, it was twenty years



"The musician jumped from his chair like a rocket.
The author bounced off the bed."

"Madame Bisson? But, messieurs——"

She paused. For a moment she stared at them both in the dark passage.

"Madame Bisson has been dead these ten years. Who are you that remember her?"

For some moments they could not speak.

ago. Others had halted at the milestones. Both were surprised to find that their eyes were wet—each was afraid to meet the other's gaze. When the author spoke, his voice was so low that the *conciierge* had to bend forward to listen.

"Ah, yes, we had forgotten."
 "But who are you, messieurs? Who are you? If you knew Madame Bisson,

They looked at her searchingly, but her face conveyed nothing to them. They stated their names simply—names that



"'Catch hold,' she said. 'It's all I can do to-night. Madame Bisson has locked the cupboard.'"

surely you must have known me, were now those of two of the world's great men—and in a flash she had thrown

respect to the winds and seized their hands.

"Monsieur Picot! Monsieur De Wisel! *Mon Dieu*, is it possible? But surely you remember me?"

They masked their inability with extreme courtesy.

"Madame——"

"Suzanne—little Suzanne, who used to go with you to the Café Pumel."

"*Dieu!* Suzanne!"

"Suzanne!"

They almost sprang at her—at this full-grown woman who had once been the little fair-haired girl who had fed them when they were hungry, and on whom they had un-failingly spent their surplus francs whenever there had been any to spend. Then and there they embraced her, these two men whose fame had reached the corners of the world. There was nothing left of the Suzanne of their memories, but they tried bravely to ignore that. For the moment they were happy again.

"Suzanne, let us go together to the Café Pumel, as we used to do. It will be like going back to the old times."

But she shook her head.

"Ah, no, that would never do. You are famous now. You cannot do the things you used to do."

They protested loudly. But she shook her head again, smiling a little wistfully. And her face was very tender, and very contented, and very good.

"Messieurs, I cannot. Suzanne has duties now. My husband will return soon, and I have children to see to—one almost as big as I was then, and just like what I used to be. Besides, there is no Café Pumel to go to."

Their arms dropped to their sides limply.

"No Café Pumel?"

"But no, indeed! Not for many years. Did you expect to find all things as you left them?"

Again they paused, looking down. And again the same muttered answer—

"Ah, yes, of course."

"But, messieurs, why have you waited so long? Madame thought of you often. And I—I thought too sometimes. Why did you not come before?"

There was no answer for a moment.

"Yes, yes, why did we not come before? But somehow—we forgot."

They could not find things to say to her. She saw that, and gave them an opportunity to escape, and they took it. In desperation

they almost fled from the house, back again to the Place des Abbesses.

"Gervase, it is no use. Let us go back."

They looked round with longing eyes. The grip of the past was on them. Their minds were far away across the gulf.

"We were wrong to come, Gustave."

The author's head was bent.

"Yes, Gervase, we were wrong to come."

They returned along the Faubourg Montmartre very slowly, scarcely glancing to one side or the other.

"They were good times," the author mused. "Even when we were hungry, and stories were rejected, and tunes refused, they were good times, Gervase."

"They were, Gustave."

The car was waiting for them. They entered it, without looking back, and drove away. Hardly a word passed between them. The musician got out at his palatial residence, and the author drove on to his own.

He sat in his luxurious study, his chin resting on his hand, gazing away back to the misty, distant shore so far astern.

He was getting old. He realised it for the first time. In looking for his youth he had found his age. In looking for the past he had found the present. It was not until he had turned to peer across the stretch of water to that cloudy shore that he found how far his ship had sailed.

He sat on. The shadows deepened and the room grew dark, but he did not move. A great longing held him—a longing to experience again, if only for one night, the pleasures, the emotions of the youth he had once been ready to barter for the fame that now failed to satisfy him. He longed to stand again in an attic, with a bundle of rejected manuscripts under his arm, cursing the editorial world that now paid him homage. It would have delighted him at that moment to have heard that an editor had refused one of the rare productions of his pen, for which all were eager to bid their highest. But, instead, on the table before him lay a pressing offer of a larger sum than even he had yet demanded.

Hours passed. Suddenly a new inclination seized him. He sat upright, his hands clenched. Rising, he stood for a moment undecided. Then he moved slowly from the room into the hall, put on his hat and coat, and let himself quietly out of the house.

In the street he hailed a taxi, and drove again to the Faubourg Montmartre. He was glad the musician was not with him. He wanted to make his last effort alone.

Dismissing the cab, he walked again in the old direction.

His destination was the little Théâtre des Fleurs, wherein once a good-natured manager had allowed him to spend an evening a week without payment. He wanted to sit or stand again as he had sat or stood then, and find pleasure in the fifth-rate turns he had once enjoyed. He would keep the secret of his attempt even from De Wisel himself.

He turned a corner and faced the theatre, pausing a moment to shudder at the appalling posters that whet the appetites and harrowed the feelings even of Montmartre. It occurred to him at the outset that any possibility of illusion had been destroyed by that shudder, and for an instant he was almost turning away. Then, with a considerable effort, he entered quickly, and the first person he confronted in the gaudy little foyer was the musician, looking particularly sheepish.

"Gervase!"

"Gustave!"

For the first time in their lives they looked scarcely pleased to see each other. The author drew the musician aside.

"Gervase, I hoped—I thought—it was a last chance."

The musician nodded.

"It is strange," he murmured, "that we should both have been thinking of the same thing at the same time."

"I could not help it, Gervase. Something compelled me. I had to try once more."

"I also," admitted the musician. They both hesitated. "Shall we go in, Gustave?"

They paid for their seats and entered unrecognised. The fact that they did pay for their seats was against them, to begin with. The interior was the same as ever. Apparently it had not even been cleaned since their last visit. The entertainment, too, had made no great strides. The first turn was a disgraceful travesty of a scene in one of the author's best-known plays. At the conclusion its creator was gasping with rage.

"Gervase, it is monstrous. I shall go out."

The musician's hand closed on his arm.

"It was horrible, Gustave. But remember we used to enjoy jokes on other people's plays."

The author admitted the rebuke, and remained in his seat. After that an individual with a voice like escaping steam murdered the musician's latest and most successful

song. De Wisel held himself down in his seat until the outrage ended.

"Gustave, it is criminal! I will not stay."

The author's touch steadied him.

"Remember, Gervase, once you would have been glad even of that."

They sat on, trying to face it all in the spirit of their memories, but failing miserably. And all the time there was the knowledge that this particular performance was as good, if not better, than those they used to enjoy. They did not blame their youth for enjoying, but their age for failing to enjoy again. Suddenly the author stifled an exclamation of anger.

"*Diable*, Gervase, a man behind has recognised us! I heard him whisper our names. A nice story it will make!"

At the conclusion of an especially atrocious turn the musician rose.

"Gustave, I cannot bear it any longer. Come out. Come out."

The author followed him in silence. Without another word, they left the theatre and faced each other in the street.

"Let us go back!" the author cried hoarsely. "We have lost it all. There is nothing left. Let us go back!"

The musician tried to conceal his emotion under an assumption of indifference.

"We must not be childish, Gustave. After all, what does it matter? We have most things people wish for—wealth, fame—"

The author wrung his hands.

"Fame! Fame! Don't talk to me of fame! I would throw it all away if only we could go back again!" His voice rose. He almost pushed the musician over in his excitement. "It was fame that made us forget. It is fame that has made us old. It is fame—"

* * * * *

Crash!

"*Mon Dieu*, Gustave, have you hurt yourself?"

The author rose from the floor.

"No, Gervase, I have not hurt myself, but I should have done if the bed had been higher. I have had an extraordinary dream."

"And I," said the musician. "I dreamt that we were famous, and that one day, after twenty years—"

The author started.

"*Diable*, did you dream that, too—that we came back and found everything changed?"

"Gustave, this is diabolical. We have

both been dreaming the same dream. It is infernal."

"It must be a warning, Gervase."

"I should interpret it," said De Wisel, "as a clear indication not to overwork ourselves in efforts for fame. I had intended to compose a tune to-night which I am convinced would have earned it for me, but I shall not do so. I have two francs

in my pocket. Shall we go down and satisfy ourselves that Suzanne has not grown old?"

"And then go on to make certain that the Café Pumel is still in existence?"

"Gustave, this is positively supernatural."

"Gervase, it is absolutely satanic!"

They seized their hats. The attic door closed behind them.



FISHERS.

ON the bare coast, at the world's end,
The fishers, each my friend,
Await with patience what the tide shall send.

For them harsh grass and stunted tree
And nightmare houses be,
Tumbled in wind and harried by the sea.

A churchyard theirs that holds its gain—
Sea-lovers most, sea-slain—
And stark church wall, church tower, and whirling vane.

God a fair tide and harvest send
Those fishers, each my friend,
Fishers that brave the sea at the world's end!

ERIC CHILMAN.



"Even for a lawyer you strike me as rather stupid."

A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE

By EMERIC HULME BEAMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY A. WALLIS MILLS

JOHN, after carefully closing the door behind him, settled his cumbersome form on the most comfortable chair in the office, deposited his hat on my roll-top desk, and said :

"It is because I wish to consult you on a professional point, Cuthbert, that I have bearded you, so to speak, in your den—your official den—in a word, your office. I may add that I am surprised and pleased to find that you really have a City office, Cuthbert. I confess that I have sometimes entertained grave doubts as to the actual existence of your City office."

"I am glad, my dear John," I said heartily, "to dispel those doubts once for all. It is always a pleasure to see you, even here. Busy as I am. John, I am, as

usual, delighted to place my time and services at the disposal of a friend."

"Thanks," said John. "I have, in fact, received a letter from Gwendoline's lawyer."

"Gwendoline's — you mean Miss Trevor?" I exclaimed. "The girl I understood you were resolved to marry?"

"Yes," said John. "You know Gwendoline pretty well, I believe. She is an old friend of your wife, Phyllis's."

"She is a charming girl," I said cordially. "You are a lucky man to be engaged to her."

"I am not engaged to her," corrected John dispassionately. "I was in a way informally engaged, but I had decided to terminate this relation on the first

opportunity. In the strictest confidence I may inform you, Cuthbert, that I have transferred my affections to another quarter. It was, in fact, with the intention of breaking the intelligence as gently as I could to Gwendoline that I took her to see pictures a few weeks ago. As a result of that unfortunate proceeding, I have, as I said just now, received a letter from Gwendoline's lawyer."

"What!" I cried, aghast. "A threat to institute breach of promise proceedings? Dear, dear!"

"Nothing of the kind," said John calmly. "I have not yet told Gwendoline definitely that an alliance between us is out of the question. The letter contains a repudiation of her responsibility in a matter of costs. I may tell you at once that I have a poor opinion of lawyers. I consider them a disreputable lot. It is because I regard you, Cuthbert, as less of a lawyer than any other solicitor in London that I have come to your office to-day."

"Candour, my dear John," I replied cuttingly, "was always one of your most engaging characteristics. Pray go on. I understand you wish to consult me. If that is so, I must beg you to be explicit and tell me without reserve the whole circumstances of this unhappy affair."

"I will do so," said John, "if you will be good enough not to interrupt me. Gwendoline, as you may know, is a very headstrong girl. Although of a yielding nature myself, I, too, can be firm when the occasion demands. We remained excellent friends until the seventh of May. On that morning I took her to the gallery. My intention was to show her the portrait of Lady Mirabelle, then entice her to a quiet seat somewhere, and announce in the kindest manner my determination to end our informal attachment. All went well till we reached the top of the stairs. Having demanded a catalogue, I found that I had no small change in my pocket. I asked Gwendoline to lend me a shilling. She at once pulled out her purse, took from it a shilling, and handed it to the man. The coin, however, slipped from her fingers, as she did so, and, rolling on to the floor, fell down a small grating close to the table."

"I perceive nothing very disastrous in that," I smiled. "Of course you immediately produced another shilling, John."

"Even for a lawyer you strike me as rather stupid, Cuthbert," retorted John, with calm scorn. "I have told you that I

had no small change. Moreover, the shilling had been already tendered for the catalogue. That was not disputed. It is true that I suggested to Gwendoline that she should produce a second shilling, but she refused, saying that she had no silver left in her purse—only coppers. I then pointed out to the commissionaire that as we had offered him the shilling for the catalogue, it was not our concern that he had not taken it. I demanded the catalogue, for which we had paid. The fellow declined, repeating that he had received no payment. I was careful to point out to him that the money had certainly been paid—he had actually seen the coin in process of payment—and that it was, in fact, now on the premises. It was his business to collect it. Legally we were entitled to the article for which that money had been duly tendered to him."

"The point, my dear John," I observed, as he paused to fix his eye gloomily on my blotting-pad, "is a very interesting one—in its purely legal aspect. As a matter of practical convenience, your income, I believe, is about four thousand a year, isn't it?"

"I do not see, Cuthbert, what my income has to do with the discussion. It was not a matter of convenience, but a matter of principle. I am a man of rigid principles, as you know. One of the guiding principles of my life has always been honesty. I have a great dislike to being swindled. This commissionaire was endeavouring to defraud me of money."

"You compelled him, I hope, John—you compelled him to hand you in exchange the catalogue?" I remarked earnestly.

"Eventually," replied John, with a profound sigh, "I succeeded in doing so, but it was a difficult matter, Cuthbert. He was at first very obstinate. He said that if the shilling was on the premises, I had better find it and give it to him. I agreed to this suggestion, and demanded that a plumber should be sent for to open the grating. The commissionaire said that he must first have my name and address. I had not the slightest hesitation in furnishing him with these, as I have no reason to be ashamed of either."

"So far, John, you have certainly succeeded in skilfully evading the law," I said kindly. "The point at issue seems to be now a mere difference of opinion as to the definition of the word 'payment' between the vendor and empor. The seller of catalogues, whom you refer to as

the commissionaire, as the vendor in the dispute, was, I trust, entirely satisfied with the moral security, so to put it, of your name, as the emptor. On the strength of this he at once handed you a catalogue."

"He did not," said John. "He was still obstinate. I was still firm. And Gwendoline was flustered and begged me to come away, for the dispute had attracted already a little crowd of people round us. As a matter of principle, I would not yield an inch. I insisted that a plumber should be sent for at once. After some further argument, a messenger boy was despatched to bring back the nearest plumber available. In half an hour he returned with a plumber and his assistant, carrying a bag of implements. The commissionaire informed the man curtly that 'this gentleman'—referring to myself—had sent for him to open the grating and rescue from its depths a shilling that had fallen into it. The operation, as you may suppose, Cuthbert, excited a good deal of interest among the visitors entering and leaving the rooms. When the plumbers set to work, there were about fifty people gathered round us, with myself, the commissionaire, Gwendoline and the plumbers in the centre. The grating, which apparently roofed a system of heating pipes, was opened without much risk or difficulty. Happily the hot-water pipes were not working. The depth of the cavity was not more than a few feet, and one of the plumbers, an intrepid young fellow, descended to search for the shilling. It was at this point that a rather unfortunate incident occurred." John paused to gaze with an abstracted eye at a blue-bottle that had flown in at the window.

"Gwendoline—alas, poor girl—fainted!" I cried.

"You are wrong, as usual," retorted John a little irritably. "And your sympathy is entirely wasted on Gwendoline. It was not Gwendoline, but the commissionaire."

"What!" I exclaimed. "The commissionaire fainted?"

"Not precisely. Your passion for interrupting people, Cuthbert, is growing positively deplorable. I was about to explain that, owing to the pressure of the onlookers, the commissionaire, who was a biggish man, turned to push them back. Just at that instant the plumber in the grating called out that he had found the shilling. There was a slight cheer from the spectators. I had been bending down over

the chasm, to encourage the workmen, and straightened myself suddenly. In doing this I collided with some force against the commissionaire, who had also suddenly swung round. The man's foot slipped, and he stumbled in a very clumsy manner into the open grating, narrowly escaping the head of the plumber. The commissionaire, in trying to save himself, twisted his left knee badly, and at first declared that he had broken his leg. This proved to be an entirely incorrect statement. It is true that the man could not walk, and he had to be taken in a cab to the hospital. I assisted to carry him or, rather, to support him downstairs and into the cab. I was anxious in every way to do my duty towards the commissionaire, although he had attempted to cheat me out of a shilling. I may add, without vanity, that a picture show had probably never before witnessed such a remarkable scene."

"It was altogether a most lamentable occurrence, John," I said sympathetically. "But while admitting that you behaved as usual with characteristic nobility, I cannot see what all this has got to do with a letter from Gwendoline's solicitor."

"I hardly expected you to see even so far as that," rejoined John. "First, however, it is necessary for you to grasp the situation thoroughly. The commissionaire was taken to the hospital three weeks ago. A week ago I received from some official or other connected with the establishment the following:—

	<i>May 7th.</i>	£	s.	d.
Messenger Boy to find and fetch plumbers to the gallery			1	0
Plumber's and assistant's charge for opening grating		15	0	0
Commissionaire's claim in respect to a fortnight's disablement from synovitis to left knee, the result of being thrown into open grating by Mr. Crumple		15	0	0
Claim for damages by plumber in respect to severe injury to right thumb, the result of said thumb being trodden upon by Commissionaire in the grating		5	0	0
Taxicab to take Commissionaire to hospital			2	0
Total		£20	18	0

"It is a most fortunate thing, John," I exclaimed, "that you were in a position to discharge this little bill at once without inconvenience."

"I have not discharged it," said John, "and I don't intend to. Why should I pay for the commissioner's knee? I didn't ask him to get into the grating, did I?"

"It is contended that you flung him in," I pointed out.

"Nothing of the kind. I merely pushed him out of my way. As to the plumber's thumb, the commissioner must pay for that, since he trod on it."

"It is a question of the primary cause of these accidents," I exclaimed amiably. "You, John, were the primary cause, and that is why the law holds you responsible for the results."

"I deny," retorted John, with some heat, "that I was the primary cause. The primary cause was somebody else's carelessness."

"But," I expostulated, "the cause of all these disasters was the recovery of your property. You insisted on recovering your property, remember, John."

"That's where you are—as usual—wrong, Cuthbert," snapped John. "The shilling that fell through the grating was not mine, but Gwendoline's. I renounce all responsibility in the ownership of the lost property."

"This puts an entirely different complexion on the matter, John," I replied. "Since Gwendoline has accepted the responsibility of the whole affair——"

"On the contrary," cut in John, "Gwendoline declines to accept any responsibility in the matter at all. As you are aware, Cuthbert, women are the most unreasonable of all created beings. I wrote quite nicely to Gwendoline, pointing out that I had, on her part, refused to pay the bill. I had written to this effect to the official. In reply to my letter the official served me with a summons to appear in the county court next week. Upon this I determined to cite Gwendoline as co-defendant with myself, so that the judge may fix the responsibility on the real culprit. I received Gwendoline's answer to my friendly suggestion in a letter from her solicitor, which I got yesterday. It was then that I resolved to consult you, Cuthbert."

"You did very well, my dear John," I said heartily. "Have you the letter with you?"

"I have," said John. "Here it is. I will read it to you."

With weighty deliberation John drew from his pocket a letter and, unfolding it, read as follows:

"To John Crumple, Esq.,
5, Coningsby House, S.W."

Dear Sir,—I am instructed by my client, Miss Gwendoline Trevor, to inform you that she accepts no responsibility in respect to the bill for damages and costs brought against you by the officials in question. She denies that the lost property under dispute (one shilling) was hers, since she had lent it to you. The coin, having been lent to you, became, therefore, *ipso facto*, your property, and the whole responsibility for whatever disasters may have subsequently attended its ownership automatically and morally devolves upon yourself.

Yours faithfully,
THOMAS WIGGS."

"I need hardly add," observed John, after concluding the letter, "that I have not taken the slightest notice of this ridiculous letter."

"Quite so, John. But the point of law is a very interesting one. It resolves itself into a question of whether the act of lending a coin to another person, without due security, entails a transference of proprietorship in the coin from the original owner to the borrower. It is quite arguable. The course I suggest to you, under the circumstances, is for you to issue a counter summons against Gwendoline for the amount of the whole claim. If in this event the judge decides that the lending of the coin by Gwendoline did transfer its ownership, your next course would be to take the matter to the Court of Chancery, where the point could be thoroughly argued out by competent counsel. I should brief on your behalf Jenkins, who is one of the ablest counsel in civil law. His fee would be about fifty guineas a day—say, three days, including retaining fees. If you lost the case, you would, of course, have to pay the costs on the other side, too—say, another hundred or so pounds. With your income, however, this would be a mere trifle."

"You will not brief Jenkins or anybody else," said John, with extraordinary decision. "I did not come here, Cuthbert, to invite you to enrich the Bar at my expense, nor do I require your suggestion as to what course to pursue, so far as the shilling is

concerned. Had I needed merely legal advice, you would have been the last person in London to whom I should have applied for it. What I want is your advice and services as a friend."

"You declared," I retorted, with some warmth, "that you wished to consult me professionally, John."

"Purely in a figurative sense,

"My dear John," I remonstrated, "what do you wish me to see Gwendoline for? The matter has gone too far."



"Pray convey to Mr. Wiggs my congratulations—and John's!"

Cuthbert," exclaimed John. "The matter is a professional matter. What I desire you to do is to see Gwendoline."

"I wish you to see her," continued John inflexibly, "in order to explain, as a friend of us both, Cuthbert, that under the

circumstances I feel it would be best that there should be no engagement between us. On the understanding that she is willing to agree to this, I am prepared to pay the bill for twenty pounds eighteen shillings, incurred on her behalf."

"That is most generous of you, John!" I cried. "There is, of course, the regrettable contingency that Gwendoline might be disposed to bring an action against you for breach of promise."

"I had that in my mind," admitted John sombrely. "She is a very headstrong girl. But as there has been no written contract or definite undertaking to marry——"

"According to our social conventions, the implication was plain," I hastened to warn him. "I, for one, John, was certainly under the impression that you were engaged to Gwendoline."

"In the course of our long acquaintance, Cuthbert," discourteously retorted John, "I have never known you otherwise than under a wrong impression about something. I am not surprised, therefore, that you should have entertained this erroneous notion. My only fear is that it may be shared by Gwendoline. In this case I entrust you with the task of dispelling it. You will see her, Cuthbert, I beg, with the least possible delay."

Of course, with my usual good nature, I consented. That is my weakness. Intensely though I dislike meddling with other people's private affairs, I can never refuse a friend in distress.

"John," I said kindly, "leave it entirely to me. I will see Gwendoline. I will explain to her that she was under a complete misapprehension—that, in fact, we were all under a complete misapprehension—as to the real nature of your sentiments towards her. I will do it with the utmost tact."

John rose and silently grasped my hand. At the door he turned.

"Be good enough to remember, Cuthbert," he said, "that my whole future career is at stake. And, by the way, you might repay Gwendoline the shilling. I have quite forgotten to do so."

II.

GWENDOLINE, whom I have known as an old school-friend of Phyllis's for many years, received me with undisguised pleasure.

"What an age it is, Cuthbert," she cried brightly, "since you came to see me! Do sit down and tell me that you are not

ill, or anything of that kind, which might account for your visit."

"I am not ill, Gwendoline," I replied gravely, "but I am deeply distressed."

"Distressed? Good gracious! Has Phyllis run away with someone, or——"

"This," I interrupted a little sternly, "is not an occasion for jesting. I have called to see you on behalf of my poor friend, John, who is broken-hearted."

"John—Mr. Crumple—broken-hearted!" exclaimed Gwendoline. "What on earth is he broken-hearted about?"

"About you," I said. "He is under the impression that you are under the impression that the engagement between you——"

"There isn't an engagement between us," broke in Gwendoline warmly. "I am not engaged, and never was engaged, to Mr. Crumple!"

"Not engaged!" I cried. "Do you mean that you have been deliberately playing fast and loose with the tenderest feelings of poor John all this time? I am both shocked and surprised at you, Gwendoline!"

"You know as well as I do," retorted Gwendoline, "that I was never engaged to John. We've always been good friends, and he has taken me out occasionally to tea. I have known him for years. But as for being engaged—why, I wouldn't marry John if—if he and you were the only male persons in the world!"

"Naturally," I agreed gently, "you would in such a case prefer me, but——"

"I merely mentioned *you* because you're already married!" snapped Gwendoline. "As for John, I've done with him. He's about the meanest man I know. Perhaps you are not aware, Cuthbert, that he actually threatens to put me in the county court for a debt that he himself incurred?"

"You surprise me," I said. "John! The most generous of men! Well, well! But surely you cannot be referring to that lamentable occurrence at a picture show, Gwendoline?"

"Oh, I see you know all about it. Well, what has he sent you to me for, Cuthbert? Are you aiding and abetting John in this disgraceful business, pray?"

"I am here," I explained soothingly, "as John's legal adviser and friend, to try and straighten out the situation for you. As a mere matter of principle, John considers that you ought to share with him the responsibility of the damage ensuing on

the successful attempt to recover your lost property."

"My lost property! What on earth do you mean? I didn't lose any property!"

"You lost a shilling," I corrected. "Your shilling fell into a grating. John, in the most chivalrous manner, determined to rescue it at all hazards. He did so. As a result, however, he incurred some necessary little expenses. These he thinks you, as the owner of the shilling, ought to pay."

"The horrid, mean wretch!" exclaimed Gwendoline. "My shilling, indeed! Why, John asked me to give it to him to pay for his catalogue!"

"He asked you to *lend* it to him," I amended. "The shilling was yours, not his."

"But he didn't! He said, 'Let me have a shilling, Gwendoline,' and, like a fool, I pulled one out of my purse."

"John did not regard the shilling as a gift," I pointed out. "He demanded it merely as a loan. Therefore it remained your shilling."

"Nonsense! I tell you he asked me to let him have it. It wasn't mine after I'd paid it to him, was it?"

"Certainly," I said. "For instance, if you lent John your motor-car, that would not make the car his property. It would still remain your motor-car."

"Don't be so idiotic, Cuthbert!" exclaimed Gwendoline, reddening. "You know perfectly well that I haven't got a motor-car. And if I had, I shouldn't dream of lending it to John. He would drive it into the first shop window he passed."

"And it's questionable whether you, Gwendoline, as the owner of the car, would not be held responsible for the damage done as a result of John's driving your car into a——"

"I haven't got a car, I tell you!" interrupted Gwendoline indignantly. "What's the use of talking such nonsense? And as for John thinking I'm going to pay for his stupidity. . . . Why, he made an absolute fool of me, standing there with a hundred people staring at us, digging in the floor for a shilling!"

"John's contrition is positively pitiable," I assured her. "He is willing, Gwendoline, to waive his claim against you for the amount of the bill for damages if you will consent to forgive him and consider the engagement confirmed. I am here to urge you to marry John."

"I will do nothing of the kind!" de-

clared Gwendoline, stamping her shapely foot. "I never had the least intention of marrying him. I—I, in fact, Cuthbert, I don't mind telling you in confidence that I am engaged to someone else."

"Someone else!" I gasped. "Pray who may this be that has supplanted my stricken friend John in your fickle affections?"

"Fickle rubbish! His name is Mr. Wiggs."

"Mr. Wiggs!" I echoed. "The youthful solicitor?"

"He isn't so very youthful," retorted Gwendoline, with a flash of resentment. "He's an old Oxford Blue, and we've just become engaged. I trust you have no objection?"

"Personally, none at all," I soothed her. "But, acting as I do for poor John, the intelligence distresses me. Indeed, under the circumstances I am not sure that it is not my duty to advise John to institute proceedings against you, Gwendoline, for breach of promise."

"There can be no breach of promise," she retaliated quickly, "when there has been no promise. Don't be so silly."

"That alters the position to an extent," I admitted guardedly. "And I may tell you, Gwendoline, that John, who is a man of the most chivalrous nature, has authorised me to say that in the sad event of your feelings towards him having changed, owing to the lamentable incident at a picture show, he will not hold you to your implied promise to marry him. Although it breaks his heart to do so, he is ready to renounce his claim upon your affections on condition that you will allow him to regard you always as his dearest friend."

"He can regard me as anything he likes, for all I care!" retorted Gwendoline ungraciously. "But I shall never speak to him again if he drags me into the county court with him."

"He will not," I assured her kindly. "In fact, he has undertaken to defray the entire costs of the recovery of your shilling, without further dispute as to responsibility, if you will consent to accept him as a friend, though you have most heartlessly rejected him as a husband."

"He has never given me the chance of doing that!" retorted Gwendoline crisply. "And if he dares to drag my name into the court with his own about that stupid bill, I'll—I'll——"

"Exactly," I interposed gently. "John thought you probably would. That's why he's so anxious to beg for your

forgiveness. His contrition is heart-rending. You will permit me to assure him that he is forgiven, Gwendoline ? ”

“ Oh, certainly. He can't help doing these things, I suppose. Now, Cuthbert, I really must rush off. I—I have an appointment.”

“ Ah, Mr. Wiggs is a fortunate man,” I murmured, “ though he should not play practical jokes in the shape of lawyer's letters to guileless people like John. I suppose that you and he concocted that letter together, Gwendoline—really a very creditable collaboration ! ”

“ I—well, but how on earth did you know ? ” gasped Gwendoline, amazed.

“ Am I not a lawyer, too ? ” I smiled. “ Pray convey to Mr. Wiggs my congratulations—and John's ! ”

* * * * *

John closed the door of my office laboriously behind him and sat down.

“ I got your wire, Cuthbert,” he said, “ and here—I may add, at great personal inconvenience—I am. You have seen Gwendoline ? ”

“ I have, John,” I replied gravely, “ and I rejoice to be able to inform you that I have succeeded, with the utmost difficulty and by the exercise of the most consummate tact, in persuading Gwendoline to release

you from your tendency to become engaged to her.”

“ I am glad to hear it,” said John, with a deep sigh. “ There was no mention of—of breach of promise proceedings, I hope, Cuthbert ? ”

“ I am bound to admit that there *was*,” I rejoined, “ but I was happily able to dissuade Gwendoline from litigation of this kind. She waives all claim upon your heart and fortune; John, in consideration of the payment by you of the bill for damages to the commissionaire and others. Her other stipulation is in the nature of a counter-claim against you for one shilling.”

“ I expressly told you to repay her one shilling,” said John. “ Did you not do so, Cuthbert ? ”

“ I did not,” I confessed. “ The fact is, John, I feared to lend you a shilling in order to repay Gwendoline the shilling she had already lent you. I perceived the possibility that by such an act I might be involving myself also in the legal question of responsibility for the recovery of the original shilling, of which the real ownership would then have reverted to myself.”

“ Cuthbert,” said John, in a tone of profound reproach, “ I am surprised at you ! ”



DOCTOR LOVE.

A door-plate in a village street bears the inscription “ Dr. Love.”

ONCE Love his stricken victims spurned,
And laughed to see them bleed,
But now the wag is doctor turned,
And heals them in their need.

ERNEST BLAKE.



"I guess I'll be photographed here. It's a duck of a background."

BETTINA IN POSSESSION

By PHILIPPA SOUTHCOMBE

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

IN the little enchanted wood was the tinkle of running water, the spirit of eternal romance—and an old boot.

There was also a voice calling someone a "quixotic young fool." It was the sort of voice that conveys the impression that it hopes it will be contradicted, just so that it may have the pleasure of reiterating the statement with emphasis.

Bettina, hidden behind bracken and bramble and a leafy beechen bough, wanted very much to see the quixotic young fool. Any girl would. Very carefully she parted the leafy screen and peered through. She saw the side elevation of a white-moustached person who was certainly not built on the plan of a quixotic young fool; obviously this was the Voice.

"You can say what you like," it went on, regardless of the fact that the quixotic young

fool had said nothing, "but I shall *not* alter my opinion. It is a perfectly fair one. You know perfectly well that this Angelina or Seraphina, or whatever her name is, would be quite incapable of appreciating a place like this—a hunting-box in the cream of a good country, the best stabling within fifty miles, and the finest woodcock shooting within a hundred."

The quixotic young fool spoke. "Her name is Bettina," he said curtly.

The listener smothered a little exclamation and recklessly tore aside a vigorous stinging-nettle, which reciprocated the liberty in the usual fashion.

Bettina suffered in silence, and reaped the reward of a clear view of the quixotic young fool, who at that moment had risen from the fallen log on which he had been seated, and faced the owner of the voice,

thereby presenting to Bettina's gaze a square, brown countenance designed on general lines of cheerful plainness and dogged determination.

"She may hunt," he added.

The owner of the voice snorted. "A musical comedy actress! Perhaps you think she'll appreciate the woodcock."

"Hang the woodcock! Can't you see that it's the only decent thing to do? At least show her the letter and let her choose for herself."

"Sentimental fiddlesticks! When you're my age, my dear boy— She won't forget to choose for herself! She'll turn the place into one for week-end parties. How would you like *that*, hey?"

"I should loathe it. But, all the same, that's all the more reason she *should* know, if she's likely to—to want to come here."

At which the Voice observed bitterly that it was a pity Tony had ever discovered the confounded letter.

"Knowing how eccentric your Uncle Hugh always was. Doesn't this prove it? He makes a will, like any sensible man, leaving everything to you, his heir, and then he must needs write a tomfool letter, and leave it in a desk for you to find, saying that he hopes you'll look up this unknown girl, make over to her an allowance, and offer her High Brake to live in for half the year. It's simply absurd!"

"But she wasn't unknown; she was his god-daughter, and her father was an Indian Army officer, and was at Marlborough with Uncle Hugh.

"She's on the stage, sir!"

"Well, I can't help that. I suppose she likes it. And, hang it all, Major, you can't go back on what a fellow asks you, when he's dead."

"He wasn't in his right mind when he wrote it. Probably he thought he'd destroyed the letter. Of course, regarding the allowance, that could be arranged, after due inquiry. But as to High Brake, my dear boy, it's out of the question—out of the question."

There was a little silence. Then Tony said, in a voice that was strangely older—

"I'm sorry, but I can't agree with you there."

Behind the bracken and the brambles Bettina sat very still. But twin imps danced in her wide grey-green eyes as she waited for the Voice's reply.

"Take an old man's advice," said the Voice, pathetically ready with the soft

answer, "and, I think you'll admit, that of an old friend of your father's, my dear boy, at least, and, I hope, of yours. Think it over, Tony! Think it over!"

It was at this opportune moment that Bettina emerged from her lair and joined the council.

The little enchanted wood was very, very still. No dryad appearing to mortal man ever managed it more effectively than Bettina appearing to the astonished gaze of Tony and the Major.

"I'm Bettina," she said gravely, by way of introduction.

The Major grew purple, Tony scarlet.

"You see, I couldn't help hearing, could I?" said Bettina, regarding the cactus dahlia effect with wide and lovely eyes.

Tony said hurriedly—

"Of course not." He even managed a smile. (Tony's smiles were distinctly attractive.) "Since you're here, and know all about it, Miss Caldecott, it rather simplifies matters, doesn't it?"

Bettina calmly admitted that it did. But she was aware that for the fraction of an instant Tony's glance had dwelt incredulously on the vision of her slim self in its faded lilac cotton frock and frankly shabby shoes. Obviously it did not accord with his conception of Miss Bettina Caldecott of the Hilarity. With commendable rapidity he was readjusting his views, but Bettina felt an explanation was demanded of her.

"You see, I'm just rustivating," she said sweetly. "It was the quaintest coincidence—my coming here, wasn't it?" This wonderful, wonderful place, you don't know how I love it already! Every day I've come to this wood; it's fairyland to me." She waved a slim bare arm with a gesture that unconsciously embraced the recumbent boot. Then she clasped her hands. "To think that I can live here—can come whenever I want a rest from the glitter and the—the insincerity!"

For the first time, then, Tony Bathurst's face lost a little of its boyish friendliness. He looked at Bettina rather hard, as if he found something vaguely distasteful in her speech. But he only said quietly—

"You're staying near here, Miss Caldecott?"

"At a farm over there." Bettina waved her arm vaguely west. "Such a darling place. June in the country! Even *you* can't realise what it means to me. And to think that I can come to High Brake! Tony—of course I must call you Tony, mustn't I?—

when will you show me the house and garden?"

"Now, if you like," he said.

"Oh!" She gave a little laugh. "That—that is very kind of you. But I think to-morrow—to-morrow would be better."

"Just as you like, of course. I only thought, as we're so near, and you're keen to see it——" He smiled sympathetically.

"Oh, I am—I am! But——" She hesitated. Tony hastened to assure her that to-morrow would undoubtedly be excellent.

Bettina turned to the Major. "And you will be my neighbour," she said brightly. "Now, that's splendid!"

The Major explained that he lived thirty miles away.

"But, all the same, we shall see one another," Bettina persisted. "I'm going to give the cutest, jolliest little parties you could think of. You see, I've got lots and lots of jolly friends who'll love to come." She laughed again. "They know how to enjoy themselves."

Tony said nothing. He was, perhaps, conscious of a certain rigidity of expression, engendered by such an odd mixture of contradictions as defied analysis. Bettina was kind enough to overlook his defection.

"Does this wood belong to High Brake?" she demanded suddenly.

Tony admitted that it did. Bettina shook her head, and pointed an accusing finger at the boot that lay among the wood-sorrel.

"When I am at High Brake——" she said, and paused significantly.

Tony got red and murmured something about tramps.

"There shouldn't be tramps in fairyland," said Bettina severely. She looked at him with mocking eyes. "Good-bye. I shall make a better squire than you do, Tony."

And with that she left them to their reflections on the situation. In the Major's case they were many and poignant, and coloured by that particularly galling taunt more crudely expressed in the words "I told you so."

Bettina kept her appointment for the morrow with unabated enthusiasm. But Tony, as he greeted her, was glad that the Major was not there to share this startlingly lovely vision in white and cherry colour. With an odd sense of anger and disappointment, he realised that here was the reason for Bettina's postponed inspection of High Brake. She had wanted to create an impression, and, true to her kind, had sought the aid of scent and lip salve and

crêpe de chine. Her cherry-sprigged frock was of the kind an exclusive designer labels "For the river or the country"; her white suède slippers, ribbon-laced over silk-clad ankles, were beautifully unsuited to tread anything rougher than a double-pile Persian carpet. She wore an enormous Leghorn hat, with floating cherry ribbons and a striking lining of black, and she wore a very brilliant smile.

Her conversation matched. She called his horse "dear pet," and stroked his splendid, gallant old John o' Gaunt's nose with gloved and scented fingers. She liked the armour on the staircase, and guessed her pals would be up to some practical joking with it; she declared the chintz drawing-room "not nearly up-to-date enough," but kindly announced her intention of brightening it up when she was at High Brake; the only pity was that "her art" prevented her from being there for long spells.

At the end of an hour and a half she demanded if she had seen everything.

"There is the iris pool," said Tony gravely.

The iris pool, planned by Tony's great-grandfather, was looking its most beautiful. Rimmed on three sides by the woods of beech and pine, it formed a resting-place for the waters of a small brown stream that trickled leisurely in at one end and out at the other, half hidden by the masses of iris, blue and gold and creamy yellow and cool grey-mauve, that crowded into the water.

The afternoon sun came slanting through a space in the green leaves; only the cool elfin note of a chiffchaff broke the stillness.

Bettina halted with a little cry of sheer delight that made Tony look at her quickly. In that one moment, it seemed, she was no longer the Bettina whose pals were destined to "brighten up" High Brake for week-ends, but someone utterly different, utterly one with the dryad charm of it all. He stood quite still and watched her. And then she shattered the spell with a laugh. "That's pretty," she said, "but, good gracious, the gnats! I guess I'll have to keep them off with a cigarette!" She fished in the deeps of gold-and-cherry bag. "Have you a match? Thanks awfully. Are there any goldfish?"

She crossed over to the stone rim that guarded the head of the pool, seated herself thereon, and trailed a slim hand in the water. She had taken off her hat and slung it over her arm by its cherry ribbons; she



"You know perfectly well that this Angelina or Seraphina, or whatever her name is, would be quite incapable of appreciating a place like this."

looked, line for line, Miss Bettina Caldecott of the Hilarity, as revealed to a delighted public by an enterprising press photographer.

Across the irises Tony still watched her, and there was that in his plain, determined brown countenance that wasn't good to see. She looked up at him with her head on one side.

"I guess I'll be photographed here," she told him. "It's a duck of a background—the sort of place where there ought to be a—what d'ye call it?—a presiding spirit."

"There might have been—once," said Tony grimly.

* * * *

Four days later he said, standing stiffly erect in the parlour of that farmhouse Bettina had designated a "darling place": "Bettina, will you marry me?"

He was looking at her squarely, and just for a second, as he spoke the words, he caught a flash in the grey-green eyes that was surely anger—anger and something else



"Very carefully she parted the leafy screen and peered through."

that baffled him. It was gone in an instant as she said lightly:

"It doesn't take you long to get an idea, does it?" She laughed. "Not that this isn't rather a good one, on the whole, you know."

And she sat there, balanced daintily on the arm of a pink-and-green wool antimacassared chair, and looked from Tony to the stuffed owl on the mantelshelf and back again.

There was a queer little silence.

Tony, it appeared, having come to the point with such commendable decision, had nothing further to say, no embellishments, no protestations. If Bettina waited for any such, she waited in vain. But perhaps, being evidently a practical person, she did not. She slipped to her feet, and, since she had looked at Tony long enough, and did not want to look at the stuffed owl again, ended the tension with a quick "One of the best, Tony!" and held out her hand to him. He found it very steady and very cold.

* * * * *

Matters having arrived at which point, all should surely have been plain sailing, and the fate of High Brake most satisfactorily settled. For the fact that it was not, you must blame, indirectly, the stuffed owl in the farmhouse parlour.

All that evening, which was wet and chilly, Miss Bettina Caldecott of the Hilarity sat with her chin on her hands and her elbows on the table, and stared at him. At ten-thirty p.m., when she should have been peacefully asleep and dreaming of herself as the charming chatelaine of High Brake, she wrote a letter.

Perhaps she left those more pleasant reflections to Tony; no doubt they kept him company when, some eight hours later, he mounted John o' Gaunt and rode down the wood's edge in the sweet freshness of a blue-and-pearl June morning following upon a night of rain. His way took him past the little enchanted wood. Involuntarily he drew rein, and perhaps he thought of the Major, for he looked, surely, far too grim to have been thinking of that first dryad vision of Bettina.

He rode on, and presently his attention was caught by a figure climbing the footpath that wound over the ridge of a heathery hill—a figure evidently in a hurry. The footpath led from the farm of the stuffed owl and the pink-and-green wool antimacassar on to the high-road that took you to the market town and nearest railway station. Between the heathery hill and Tony Bathurst was a hedge with a stone stile in it. When John o' Gaunt found his head pointed at this uncompromising obstacle, and felt Tony's spurs jam suddenly into his sides, he might have been pardoned for swerving from it violently. A second later, with the sting of Tony's crop on his sleek neck, and perhaps the memory of three good seasons' hunting to urge him, he had rocketted

over, landing safely, to his own no little surprise, and was galloping up a path better suited to goats.

Ten yards from the highway a Bettina, whose grey-green eyes looked very large in a small, pale face, was saying firmly: "I've got to catch a train, Tony—I can't wait."

Tony Bathurst hadn't got a determined countenance for nothing. He was off John o' Gaunt now, and facing her squarely. He said nothing, but his manner intimated that the train would, in all probability, depart without Bettina.

She went on, rather less firmly: "I've left a note for you at the farm, by the stuffed owl. I simply couldn't stand it any longer."

"Stand what?"

"The—the owl, and marrying you! I—I've explained it all in the letter. And—and I must catch my train."

A shrill whistle followed hard on her words.

"You can't possibly now," said Tony grimly, "so you may as well tell me just what the stuffed owl and I have in common."

Bettina drew a long breath and, it would seem, recognised the inevitable.

"It all began in the wood," she said, and Tony, who was only too well aware of that, made no comment. She went on: "I was most awfully lonely—and dull and bored, and I did it for fun. Of course I know that's no excuse, really. I couldn't help hearing, and I wondered if you would in the end be persuaded by that horrid old Major. I'm not Bettina Caldecott at all. I'm Bettina Trevelyan. But I know the real Bettina Caldecott—we went to school together—and she's the nicest girl in the world. It made me furious to hear her being discussed like that. I thought I'd teach you a lesson, so I pretended. And then—and then you asked me to marry you." The grey-green eyes flashed. "That made me more furious still, because I knew that you couldn't really like me, and so it must have been just because——"

"Yes?" prompted Tony quietly.

She gave a little weary laugh.

"It's so obvious, isn't it? Because it was the best way out, and you could go on living at High Brake."

There was a long pause; then Tony said curtly: "But, in spite of that, you accepted me."

"I—I meant to play out the game to the bitter end, and I thought it would serve you right when you found out I wasn't Bettina

Caldecott, and I knew you didn't care. . . ." She stopped suddenly, looking away from him.

"And where," said Tony, still in that quiet, inexorable voice, "where does the stuffed owl come in?"

But Bettina did not answer him, for it would seem that she did not find it easy to explain in what precise manner the round-eyed stare of a stuffed owl could have influenced her to compunction.

Tony said, after a pause: "Now that you've missed the train, what are you going to do?"

"Catch the next. Anyway, I only came here for a fortnight, and I've stayed three weeks. Mrs. Gale, at the farm, is my old nurse. I live with an aunt in Suffolk. And—and why did you come like this? I didn't want to see you again——"

Her voice trailed into a sudden silence that was broken only by the sound of John o' Gaunt tearing mouthfuls of heather. Then Tony said the amazing thing.

"You can write and tell your aunt that you're going to marry me next week."

"But I'm not Bettina Caldecott, and High Brake——"

Tony left John o' Gaunt to his own devices and put both hands on her shoulders.

"High Brake doesn't count," he told her, "since you happen to be the Bettina I've wanted all the time."

She looked at him with serious eyes.

"Even—even by the iris pool?"

"Even by the iris pool, you little goose. Didn't the stuffed owl tell you that?"

* * * * *

She told him, some twenty minutes later, that the real Bettina had married a New South Wales sheep-farmer and sailed for Australia ten days ago.

"So you see, you'll have to put up with the—the other."

She stared dreamily away across the heather in the direction of the little enchanted wood, and Tony demanded what she was thinking of.

"The old boot," said Bettina severely. "You know it made me feel that you didn't deserve to have High Brake and the iris pool."

Tony laughed.

"Since you're going to ascribe everything you did to old boots and stuffed owls," he said whimsically, "I wonder what extraordinary object has made you say you'll marry me."

"You," said Bettina gravely.

MEMORY.

LAST night we quarrelled, you and I
 (Though why we quarrelled neither knew),
 And in my bitterness your face
 Before my eyes unlovely grew.
 And then, while still your voice was harsh,
 While still your words came hot and fast,
 Something you did—I know not what—
 And all my anger passed.

Some trick, some movement loved of old—
 The way you tossed your head, the way
 Your long hands twisted—and my heart
 Leapt back to that forgotten day
 When, where the beech-leaves idly fell,
 We sat above the Autumn mist,
 Your shoulder lightly touching mine,
 And, for the first time, kissed.

BRIAN HILL.

PEARL-FISHING IN GREAT BRITAIN

By ROWLAND CRAGG

OUT in mid-stream a man was stooping over the water and occasionally jabbing something with a rod, transferring his capture to a sack slung over his shoulders. On the bank, seated carelessly on a low wall, was a second man, sleeves rolled up over sun-browned arms, his waders dripping, dexterously opening mussels and tossing the shells back into the river.

"Bait?" I asked, as I drew up alongside him and he nodded a greeting.

"No"—he smiled—"pearl-fishing."

It was my turn to smile. Somewhere in that jumble-room of memory often alluded to as the back of one's mind there lay a vague unclassified notion that there was—or should it be had been?—such a thing as pearl-fishing in British rivers, but it seemed to rank with gold mining in Wales and treasure-hunting in the waters off Tobermory—more of an adventure than a serious industry. So that the idea of pearl-fishing to-day in a Cumberland river, with the Lake mountains lifting big in the not distant background, made me smile. Moreover, during the War our young men picked up and developed the habit of fending off curious strangers with a little gentle leg-pulling. I thought I recognised the symptoms.

Perhaps I put him on the defensive. At all events, he threw the last shells into the river, fished in his vest pocket, and produced a little roll of soft wasn't-leather. Unwrapping it, he showed me some half-dozen pearls, the largest about half an inch long and of perhaps the same diameter; the rest small, just large enough to make a neat stone for a tie-pin. One was of a faint pink tinge.

"Oh, that," he said, as I handled it, "that's a bad one. It's no good, really—

not the right colour. This is the best." He picked up the big one. "That I got in the Forth."

It was a handsome stone. "Yes," he went on, "the Forth's the best river we have for this business: the Scottish rivers generally are the best."

"Where else do you fish?" I asked.

"Oh, I must have tried every river in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, but give me the Scottish rivers."

"What about the Irt?" I asked, indicating the river below us. We were not many miles from the spot where the Irt runs out of the gloom of Wastwater.

"Not much doing yet. But we've been here only a short time. In fact, only this week have we started, for we've had to wait a fortnight, during that rain, for the river to fall."

"And how long have you been at this business?"

"Oh, practically all my working life. I followed my father, and he followed his father. Mostly all of us fished Scottish waters, but I thought I'd try further afield."

His grandfather's fishing days would date back to the period when British river pearl-fishing had been brought virtually to an end by the destruction of the pearl-bearing river mussel. Pearl-fishing in Scottish waters, as in Wales, was once famous, but it appears to have suffered from periodic depression, almost extinction, because it is destructive of mussel life. Such a period fell upon the industry in Scotland in the middle of last century, but it began to revive about 1861. In that year a fillip seems to have been given to it by the appearance of a German merchant, one Moritz Unger, who travelled Ayr, Perth, and Aberdeenshire, buying up all the stones he



PEARL-FISHERS ON THE IRT.

could lay hands on. The price ranged from five to seven shillings a grain, and he set up a demand that appears to have stimulated the supply.

The Scottish pearls have been famous for their beauty, and some of them figure among the Crown jewels. Their rarity in these days and an increased appreciation of their beauty have sent up the price, which runs from £1 to £10 per grain, according to quality and size. The big one shown me by the fisherman of the Irt was valued by him at £40 at least. There is a small collection of half a dozen pearls got from the Tay, and bought in 1859 for the Royal

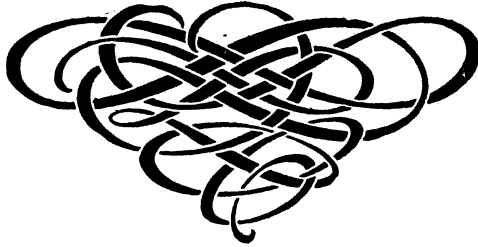
Scottish Museum for £12, which are now valued at over £50. This appreciation in their value has had disastrous results in recent years. They are referred to by Mr. James Ritchie in his study of the faunal evolution of Scotland. He says: "The result of the new demand was that the more accessible shallows of pearl rivers were soon denuded of their mussels, for the methods employed were of the most ruthless kind, all the mussels found being opened and destroyed on the chance that a pearl might lurk within. The shallows have now become almost entirely unproductive, and of recent years attention has been

turned to deeper waters. . . . But the outcome is that many a river and burn has been almost cleared of its pearl mussels."

The Welsh Conway yields two kinds of pearl-bearing mussels. One of them is found up the river above Trefriw, and according to historians pearls are occasionally found in them scarcely inferior to Oriental stones. Like the Scottish pearls, the Welsh ones figure in connection with Crown jewels, for Sir Richard Wynne, of Gwydir, presented one to Catherine, the consort of Charles II., which is supposed still to be in one of the Royal crowns. Spenser, in his "Faerie Queen," also makes reference to the Conway pearls.

But to return to our fishermen of the Irt. Their outfit is simple. It consists of waders that come well up over the thighs and are braced round the shoulders, a slim stick shod with a pronged fork, and a "view-finder." The latter is interesting. It is like nothing so much as the ordinary domestic lading-can, of the type known in the West Riding, where the dialect still flourishes, as a "piggin." Instead of a metal bottom, a circle of plate-glass is

fitted in and cemented to keep the interior of the can watertight. The pearl-fisher sinks this glass a few inches below the surface of the water and obtains, especially if the sun is on the river, a very clear view of the river-bed. When he finds a mussel, he puts the prongs round it, twitches it free from the stones, and lifts it to the surface. As he needs his other hand free to detach the mussel from the prongs and convey it to the bag slung on his back, he takes the view-finder in his teeth. It is of a diameter big enough to cover his eyes and forehead, so that he has no difficulty in seeing what he is doing under water. But he needs strong teeth, for plate-glass, to say nothing of the metal of the can itself, is by no means light. When his bag is sufficiently full, he goes to the bank and overhauls his catch. The process is simple. The shell is opened, the thumb is run round the inside, and any protuberances are carefully examined and, if thought good, removed. Then the mussel and shell are returned to water. It seems essentially destructive; as an industry it would also seem highly speculative.

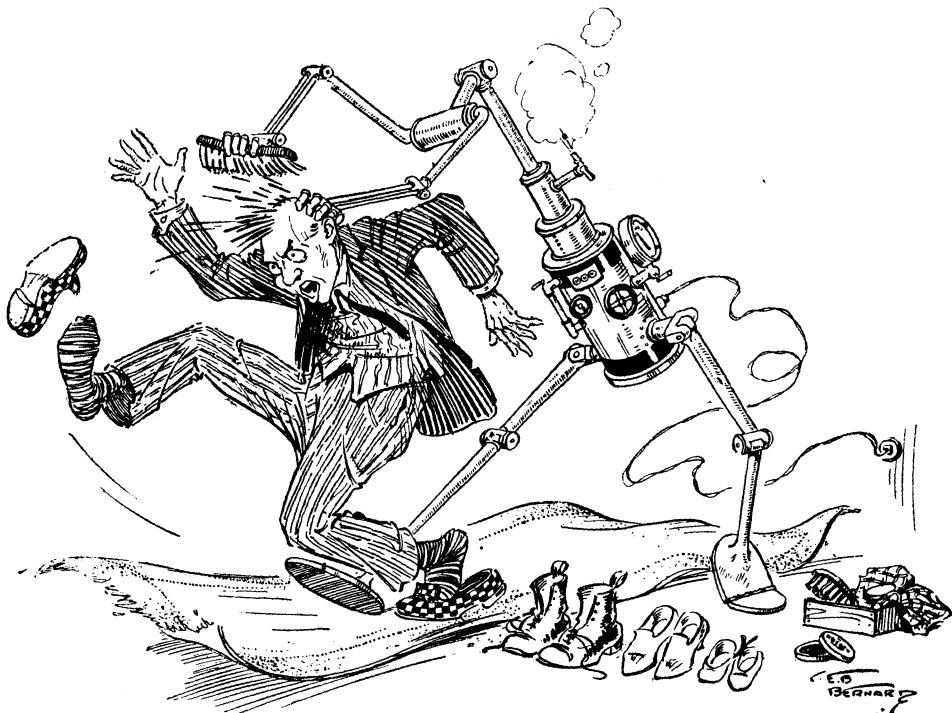


THE UNPARALLELED.

SIMPLY because no language could devise
Comparison for those dear lips and eyes,
My tongue fails; and, to praise her, I profess
There is no pattern for her loveliness.

Scour the thin air in unremitting flight,
Search the deep earth and sea, without respite;
Under the earth, beneath the sad sea rove;
Thou shalt find nought to parallel my love.

E. VINE HALL.



SPRING-CLEANING UP-TO-DATE.

WHAT happened to Jones after his wife's enthusiastic purchase of the new automatic labour-saving machine.

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

TOWSER.

By B. Noel Saxelby.

THIS is a true story, and Towser is a real dog—unless by this time he has come to a melancholy end in the lethal chamber. On the whole, I think it not unlikely.

We made his acquaintance one Sunday night. Elizabeth, who had been to the post, burst in with the announcement that there was a poor lost dog outside, such a dear, and wouldn't I go and look at him? There was no need to go, however. Elizabeth had unwarily left the front door open, and at that moment the poor lost dog hurled himself on to the Chesterfield beside me and endeavoured to wash my face and deposit some of his superfluous dust on my coat at one and the same time. Then he attempted to express some of his gratitude by playfully biting Elizabeth's hands. Finally he sat down and smiled at us.

"Isn't he a darling?" sighed Elizabeth in a sort of ecstasy. "I wonder where he comes from?"

He wore a collar, so the obvious course was to examine it, which we did. It bore an address at Brighton, and Elizabeth shed tears at the

thought of the poor creature's fifty-mile journey.

"He must be starving," she exclaimed, and hurried to the kitchen to cater for the travel-worn wanderer, the travel-worn wanderer signifying his approval by treading on her feet all the way.

"I always did like Irish terriers," she remarked a little later, as we watched our guest supping luxuriously off chicken bones and bread-and-milk.

"Airedales," I corrected.

"But look at his brown back!"

"And his silvery head—and his size!"

"Well, I must say his *tail* might be anything," conceded Elizabeth, and the tail, hearing itself mentioned, gave a deprecating wag as its owner crunched the last bone.

We tried him with many names, but as he answered with equal willingness to all, we got no further. The only one he seemed indifferent about was "Bob," and this ought to have warned us of his real character.

"We'll call him Towser," decreed Elizabeth at last, "because—well, because he looks it." And, indeed, he did.

I sent a postcard to the address on Towser's

collar, though Elizabeth hoped audibly that he never would be claimed. Then we put him to bed under the kitchen table, with a drink of water beside him in case he should feel thirsty in the night.

By the next morning Towser had adopted the rôle of faithful retainer. He took a little stroll, being careful not to go far, and returning dutifully to the back door. Later he accompanied Elizabeth to the grocer's to buy carbolic soap (strong), in happy ignorance that

letters with some anxiety, but there was no communication about Towser.

"You must get him a new collar to-morrow," she directed me contentedly, "and one of those leashes with a whistle at the end." And Towser signified his approval by walking under a chair, causing it to stagger drunkenly.

Alas for plans! At that moment Mary entered with a note for me, delivered by hand. Elizabeth looked over my shoulder as I read:—

"DEAR SIR,

Your card has just reached me, *via* Brighton, and I much regret that my dog has been bothering you. I expect the rascal was just looking out for something to steal. Perhaps you will be good enough to hand him over to my little girl. If you have incurred any expense, etc."

The address on the letter was that of the house opposite, where new tenants had lately moved in.

We looked at one another and then broke into a simultaneous peal of laughter. Then we glanced round for the culprit. But the culprit was already half-way across the road. He knew the game was up, but he had had his Arabian Night's Entertainment.

We have not seen Towser since, but from time to time Mary has gleaned news of him. Thus, his name is Bob (of course), and he has recently been

lost again and heard of (*via* Brighton, we presume) at a place several miles away. Since then "he only goes out when father takes him."

But Towser has not forgotten us, and this is how we know.

The following Sunday another dog presented himself at the door and insisted on coming in. This, too, was an Airedale (in parts), but lacked Towser's winning ways. We gazed at him dumbfounded, as he calmly sniffed round the hall. Was our house, all unknown to us, starred in the Dogs' Baedeker? If so, it evidently



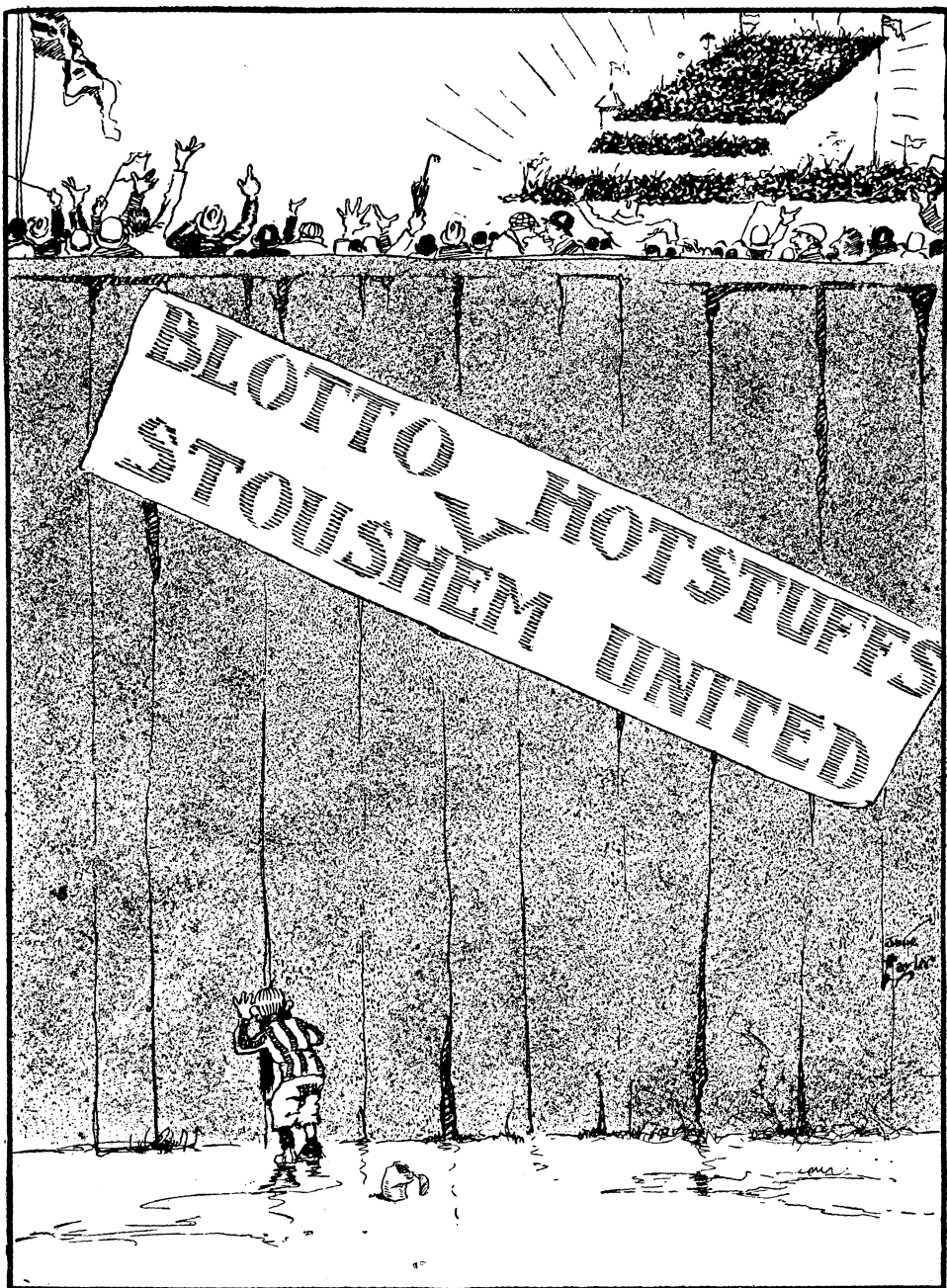
NO CLUE.

"But surely, Jane, the ladies left their cards?"

"They tried to, mum, but I said you had plenty of your own, and better ones, too."

it was to do duty on his own back. For Elizabeth had determined, for our sake and his, to give him a bath. A little later I was called in to see the result. There in a tub stood Towser, depressed but docile, sad-coloured streams of water cascading from his nose and tail, while Elizabeth worked up a vigorous lather on his back with a scrubbing brush. However, the ordeal was soon over, and a few minutes later he was merrily drying himself on my legs and the hearthrug.

On Tuesday morning Elizabeth scanned the



THE OPTIMIST.

failed to come up to the newcomer's expectations. Perhaps the aspect was not right; possibly he mistrusted the cooking. At all events, he quietly took his departure.

But here we come to the mysterious part of the affair. The dog walked straight across the road, in at Towser's gate, and round to the back premises and, presumably, the immured Tower.

What puzzles us is this. Had Towser sent this friend to assure us of his devotion, to pay

his duty call by proxy, as it were? Or had he merely passed on the tip, being himself unable to make use of it further?

"There's a regular pair of flats in that house," I can hear him saying, with a vulgar wink. "Fair took 'em in, I did. Just give 'em a bit of soft soap and plenty of tail wag, and they'll eat out of your hand . . ."

But all dogs are not Towsters, which is perhaps fortunate for us.

SPRINGITIS.

(On March 21st the sun enters Aries, and Spring commences.—*Official.*)

Oh, the sun has entered Aries, whatever that
may be,
And even if it hadn't 'twould be all the same to me.
So a simple song of Springtime, ere a shilling I
invest
In a greatly needed hair-cut, I am getting off my
chest.

Very early in the morning I am wakened by the
thrush—

Oh, my mistake, I'm sorry; it's the painter with
his brush,

And all the while he's painting, comic songs he
loves to sing.

I wish he wouldn't do it, but he's welcoming the
Spring

It is said that among smart French women
it is the thing to colour the face to match the
frook. We can only hope that tartans will
not become fashionable in France while this
craze lasts.



AN official report states that there is only
one telephone to every forty-five persons in
England. Even so, this means that it is
possible to get on to about a million wrong
numbers.



OFFICIALS are to be placed on the French
railways to call out the names of the stations
in English. It would be a bright idea to send
some of our own porters out to France to take
lessons in this useful art.

**THE TEST.**

"Do you know, dear, young Anderson has proposed to me twice while we have been here? But I refused him."

"But I'm told he's quite rich."

"Oh, yes—but I never could bear his approach."

Oh, the garden at this season is arrayed in dainty
dress,

There's the blossom on the pear-trees, and the
mustard and the cress.

But, with all respect to Nature, I could do without
one thing—

That's the everlasting rhubarb which is rampant
in the Spring.

I go to bed in Springtime free from any thoughts
of crime,

But the man next door keeps chickens, and they're
working overtime;

When they rouse me from my slumbers, all their
necks I'd like to wring;

But this soothing thought restrains me—eggs are
cheaper in the Spring.

R. H. Roberts.

ACCORDING to an eminent scientist, the world
is now pear-shaped. There seems nothing for
it but to wait till it comes round again.



"FATHER," said the small boy "what is the
difference between a capital levy and capital
punishment?" And father explained: "One
takes your money and the other your life."



"IN choosing your occupation in life, aim
high, my boy, and remember there is always
room at the top," remarked the professor.

"Yes," said the pupil, "but I am aiming
low, and want plenty of room at the bottom: I
am going to be a diver."



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DEFEATING THE DESPOTS.

By James Garland.

ONE morning my wife, who interests herself in these matters, suggested that my raven locks required a trim. Thereupon I promptly made tracks for the establishment of that good but garrulous soul Snip. Snip has barbered my head for many years, and if he lacks the finish of the West End artist, he is a fairly reliable authority on racing form. When I entered, he was engaged in the removal of stubble from the rubicund countenance of an agricultural client, which operation probably engrossed his whole attention. At any rate, he failed to extend the usual affable greeting to me, which I thought rather strange.

However, I took the chair and awaited the preliminaries. Instead of tucking the blue-and-pink winding sheet around my neck, Snip took a magnifying glass from the drawer where he keeps his cash.

"Would you mind 'olding the chin a little further forward?" he inquired, as he tilted my head against the back of the chair.

I tried to protest, but his hand covered my mouth, while he made a minute examination of my chin with his confounded microscope.

"Um!" he remarked at length. "I thought as much."

"What the blazes are you up to, Snip?" I exclaimed, as soon as he removed the gag. "Are you working out a Sherlock Holmes idea, or do you suspect that I have developed measles?"

"No, sir. I was merely confirmin' my suspicions that you 'ad shaved yourself this morning—that's all. Those three gashes around the dimple are too clumsy for the work of a barber. That right, sir?"

I nodded, and he continued—

"It was recently decided by the local Hairdressers' Association that self-shavers were not desirable customers, bein' a menace to the profession, and could only be tolerated, under protest, for 'air-cut at a charge of four shillings per crop. It has been proved that you have not been shaved by a member of the craft, an' in the interests of justice I submit my terms for your consideration."

"You may take your terms to a region where singeing is more popular than scissoring, my good man," I exclaimed haughtily, "and I'll see you smothered in your own lather before I submit to your impertinent demands."

He merely grinned as he watched me down the street. I next called on Clip, the owner of the other saloon of which our village can boast.

Clip, if not so thoughtful in the use of clean towels as his rival, is not imbued with such

lofty ideas, so I hoped for the best. He certainly dispensed with the bacteriological examination, but had the rest of the formula off by heart.

Indignantly I returned home and drafted a strong letter to *The Boom*. For a time I used bigger doses of brilliantine to conquer my curls, but my hair seemed to thrive under this treatment to an alarming extent. Soon the little boys were humming a tune of bygone days, which I recognised as a rude hint to get one's hair cut. But I refused to capitulate, and grimly shaved myself each morning as it came. Neither would I go to the expense of a railway



Peter Traversy

BAD FORM.

ALBERT: Fancy you takin' notice o' that bloke—playin' marbles in a cricket cap!

journey to Town in order to defeat Snip and Co. It became rumoured that I was likely candidate for the Laureateship. The vicar, calling one afternoon, made reference to a "genius in our midst," and solicited a sonnet for the parish magazine, while Widow Brown, who performs feats with a mop at my establishment on Thursdays, boldly asked for "a line or two for the old un's gravestone."

After that I took to my room till nightfall, using a set of curlers for the captivity of my tresses. And it was only yesterday that a solution presented itself to my mind. I dis-

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The Hall Mark of the Smart Woman

By MIMOSA.

To be really smart a woman must convey the impression of being daintily fastidious regarding her personal belongings and appearance. Her hair and skin must look as though they retained the appearance of youthfulness as a result of cleanliness and care. This is impossible where the skin is spasmodically subjected to experiments with all sorts of preparations. The really smart woman will know what she is using, and those who follow this advice will use only simple, pure ingredients that can be procured in original packages. If the chemist does not have what you want, he can easily obtain it for you, if you insist. In many instances you will find, however, that the articles you require are at hand in your own home.

"Beauty's Cheeks."—Some face creams have a tendency to induce a growth of down on the face. You can be on the safe side by avoiding made-up creams, using instead the natural mercolized wax. It will protect your face in motoring, and holds the powder perfectly. It is the last word in smart effective toilet luxury.

"Beautiful Lashes."—The character of the eyebrows and lashes certainly has much to do with the beauty of the face. Get about an ounce of mennaleine and apply a little at night, brushing gently in the morning. This will bring about a decided improvement in the texture of your eyebrows and lashes.

"Washing Hair Brushes."—Scrupulous cleanliness of the brushes is necessary if you wish to keep your hair in good condition. The best way is to use curd soap and a little household ammonia in warm water. Let the brushes soak for a short time, then wash them thoroughly. Rub as dry as possible and air in the sun.

"Scanty Locks."—Thick glossy coils of your own hair means devoting time to brushing and scalp massage, also an occasional use of hair tonic to keep the hair healthy. The best and simplest tonic is bay rum and boranum. Get about an ounce of boranum in a small original packet, mix it with ½-pint of bay rum. This will clear off any dandruff and materially aid in producing the desired result.

"Large Pores and Blackheads."—This is the formula: Obtain a few stymol tablets from the chemist's and dissolve one in a cup of hot water; after the effervescence has subsided, dab the face, using a small sponge. The result is quite startling. This is an excellent astringent. Used every day will close enlarged pores and prevent wrinkles.

"Bloom of Health."—The use of rouge, if obvious, is rather vulgar. You can get over the difficulty and still have nice rosy cheeks by using powdered collindum. Get a small tin and apply a little with the tips of the fingers. It is quite harmless, and its natural colour blends with the tint of the skin, so its use can never be detected if it is applied properly.

"Cupid's Bow."—The best thing to use for your lips is just a stick of soft proclatum. Rub this over the lips and it will give them the desired colour and keep them soft and fresh.

"Superfluous Hair."—You can remove that undesirable down on your face with pheninol. Get an ounce and apply a little to the hair, which can soon be rubbed off, leaving the skin quite clear. It is very simple to use, and has the effect of so weakening the roots that the hair will not return.

"Lack-lustre Hair."—If your hair is dull and lustreless after a shampoo, you are using something that is too soapy. Try just plain stallax. Get an original package, as it is more economical. A teaspoonful in a cup of hot water for each shampoo is sufficient, as it foams tremendously, and rinses off easily, leaving the hair lustrous and tuffy, with a dainty suggestion of perfume.

"Premature Greyness."—This trouble may be easily overcome and the hair restored to its natural colour, by using concentrate of tammalite. Mix it with about the same quantity of bay rum, and apply with a small sponge.

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HAPPINESS FOR EVERYONE A NOTE OF THANKS!

John Mackintosh & Sons, Ltd., acknowledge the very cordial reception of their Christmas appeal on behalf of poor children, and thank all whose generous support made it possible for tens of thousands of kiddies to enjoy in fuller measure the amenities of the festive season. Holly Bags from readers of *The Windsor Magazine* were sent to Dr. Barnardos' Homes.

covered how to defeat the profiteer without loss of dignity.

Concealing my coiffure under a sou'wester, I hastened to confront the fiend Snip.

"Look here," I thundered, "what is your charge for a shave?"

"Sixpence, sir, an' t-tenpence 'aircut," he said, with a gasp.

"Right," I replied. "Here's one and fourpence. Now please get your shears to work on my thatch."

When he had finished I thanked him, and told him I would look in for the shave later.

If you, dear reader, have similar trouble, write to your M.P. about it.



"EVERY wrinkle," says a science paper, "has three thousand five hundred teeth." Anyone meeting a mad wrinkle should certainly try to avoid being bitten by it.

GRANDPA (buying himself a birthday present): I want a really good mechanical toy.

SHOPMAN: Yes, sir. About how old is the child?

GRANDPA: Seventy-four to-morrow.



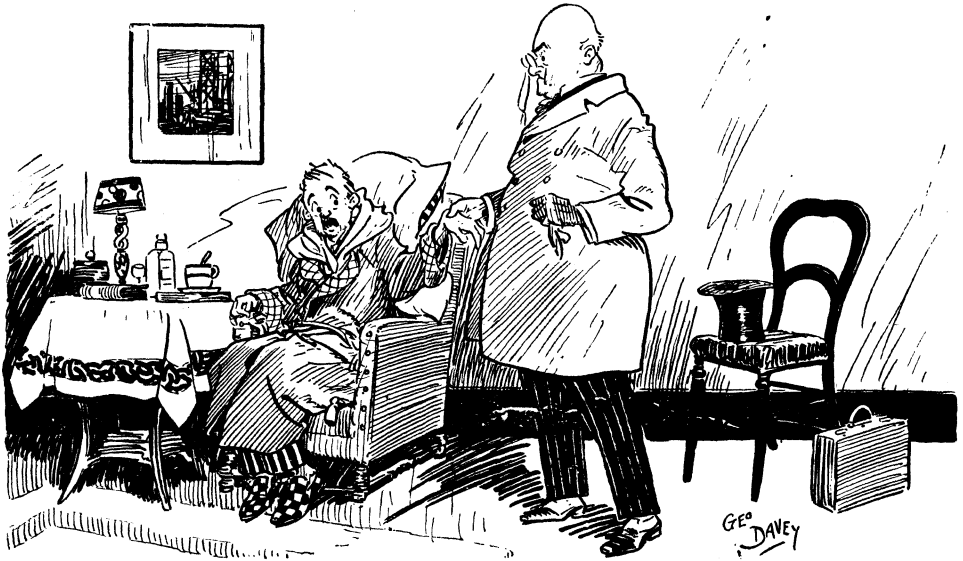
"My friend Dauber painted a basket of plums so naturally that——"

"Yes, I know what you are going to say—the birds came and pecked them."

"Not at all—his wife made them into jam."



THE driver and conductor of a London tram have not spoken to one another for fifteen years. This seems to confirm the statement of a recent writer that the art of conversation is dying out.



IT MADE A DIFFERENCE.

"Your pulse is very weak."

"Yes, doctor, but I've been asleep for two days and not had any food till now."

"Two days! But did you take more than the amount of sleeping powder I told you to take?"

"Well, doctor, you told me to take enough to cover a sovereign, but where could I get a sovereign these days? I had to use a one-pound note."

"I THINK Jenkins is the most absent-minded man I know. At the fancy-dress ball the other evening, when people asked him what he was supposed to represent, he said he had quite forgotten."

"Well, he had to say that because he really went as the man who lost his memory."



MOTHER: Have you a small piece of brown paper, dear? I want to wrap a parcel.

FATHER: Well, I can unroll one of those cigars you gave me.

Facing Third Cover.]

"Do you know that Miss Tompkins wears a wig?"

"My dear, you don't say so. Is she quite bald?"

"Oh, no, she's a barrister."



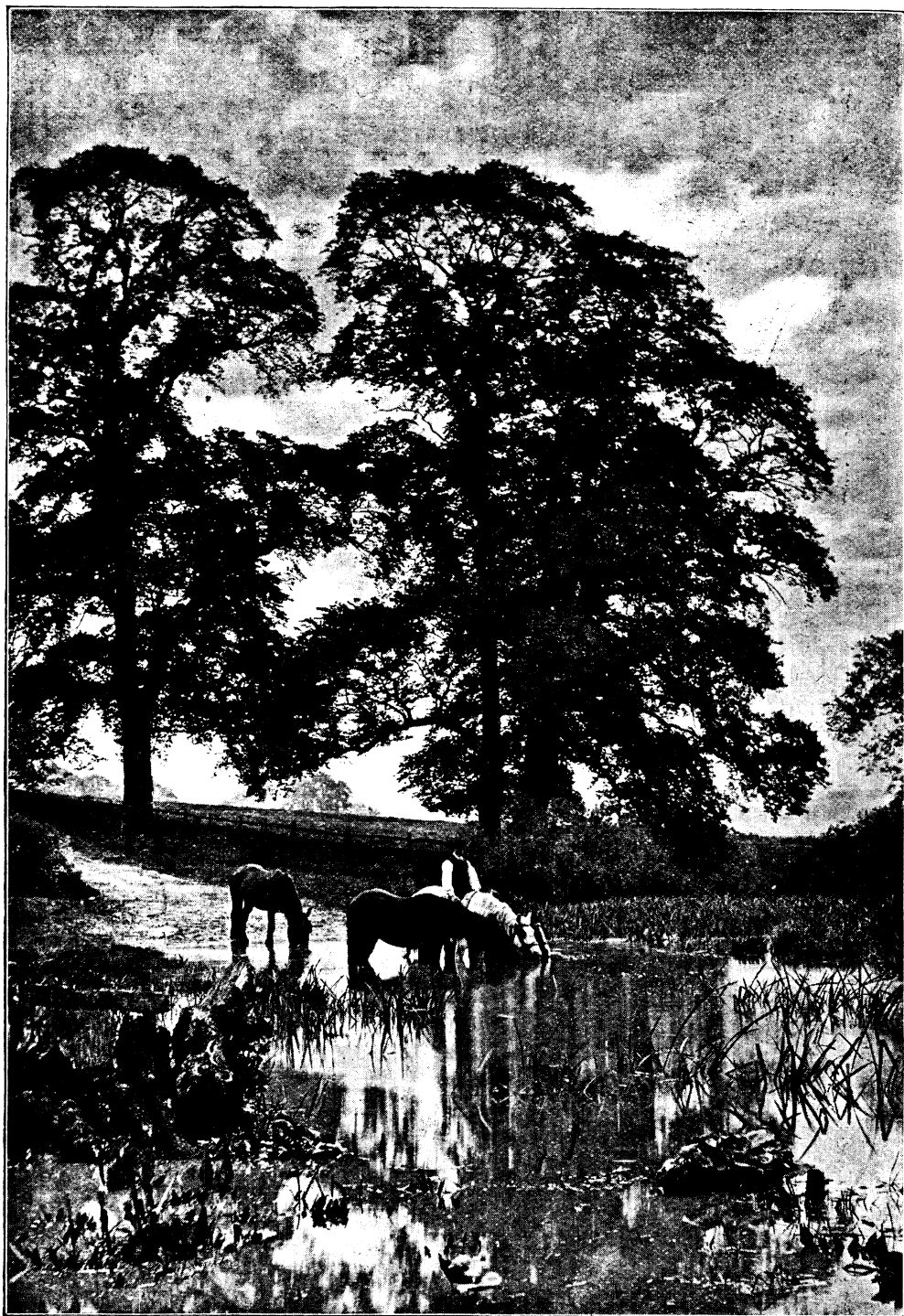
"SPACE should be found in every garden for the useful *helichrysimum*," says a seed catalogue.

Yes, we know, but the difficulty is to find room for the label.

THE MAY
WINDSOR



WARD LOCK & CO. LIMITED • LONDON & MELBOURNE
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WATERING THE HORSES.

A PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDY BY COLONEL GALE.

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"He caught the gleam of the crises, and knew that the moment was big with peril."

A LOCHINVAR OF THE LINE

By OTTWELL BINNS

Author of "A Hazard of the Snows," "The Treasure of Christophe," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

THIS quest of the true Romance began in Wall Street, New York, where romance is notoriously lacking, and it ended, as you shall presently hear, in the drowsy, steamy East, where, of course, it is the breath of life. The exact moment of its inception was 11.30 of a sweltering June day three years ago, when, listening to the click of typewriters and the

whir of telephone bells in his father's office, a sudden loathing of life as he knew it surged in Olaf Gunderson's soul and brought a frown to his handsome face. For a full minute he stood listening to the sounds, considering the day's work, visioning the years ahead, then he laughed harshly.

"Great Scott! What a life!"

A mist clouded his light-blue eyes, form-

less things called to him; he felt the breath of sea-winds in his hair, a mad impulse to smash the office furniture, and a longing to be done with these dull days. Then his eyes fell on the back of a magazine that he had been reading on his way down to business, and stayed there, held as by some strong magnet.

What they saw was a steamship company's advertisement, with a picture of a white steam yacht floating on a sea as blue as sapphires outside a harbour fringed with sands of white coral, with tall palms waving green pennons in the air and leaning towards the sea as if to catch its whisper.

Son of a sea-going race, he also heard that whisper. Faint enough at first, as he continued to stare, it grew clamorous till every little nerve in his giant frame was thrilling to it. Then quite suddenly he got busy. A clerk was set to work looking up trains, another telephoning for a berth in that charming white yacht pictured in that bluest of seas, and an hour later he had kicked the dust of Wall Street from his feet, leaving pinned to his father's desk the briefest of messages—

"Have gone for a vacation. Will be back in a year."

Four months later he stood outside a big tent set on the outskirts of a little-known Malayan town. He was lean and bronzed, with a long scar on his cheek that was the gift of a native who had run amok in the streets of Palembang. Hatless, his yellow hair shone in the sun, and there was laughter on his lips as he looked at the pictorial advertisements hanging on the canvas walls, which set forth the fact that Paddy Malone of San Francisco, the great American animal-trainer, was that day giving an exhibition of his performing lions and tigers.

Wondering what odd freak of fortune or twist of nature had sent this compatriot of his with his lions and tigers to Malaya, he laughed again. Then his laugh was cut in two, and a look of wonder came in his blue eyes.

Moving towards the tent, plainly with the intention of entering, was a native girl. That she was a person of consequence was proved by the attendants who accompanied her, and by other things as well.

Her dress was that of a lady of rank. A jacket of crimson satin, cunningly wrought with gold and jewelled with ruby buttons, a skirt of shimmering silk that reached to the ankles, a sarong of blue, and heelless shoes ornamented with gold upon the little feet,

made up this attire, with a veil so fine that spiders might have spun it. Under the veil he caught the flash of diamond earrings, rubies and diamonds gleamed upon her small hands, and as she walked there was the clank of golden bangles and anklets. Having taken stock of her, he laughed again and begun to hum to himself—

"For I've got rings upon my fingers
And bells upon my toes,
And elephants to ride upon—"

The song checked suddenly as he saw the lady look at him. For a brief time—so brief, indeed, that he was scarcely sure that it had been—the veil was drawn aside, and he glimpsed a pair of eyes with irises black as night set in blue-white wells, and which betrayed wonder as they looked on this yellow-haired viking of an alien race. Then something besides wonder flashed in those marvellous eyes—a flame that seemed to burn him, that set his pulses rioting, and that, as she passed on, left him with a spinning head.

He stood there like a man turned to stone—all except his eyes, which burned diamond-bright as they watched her enter the circus. Then a muttered word broke from him: "The Jewel of Asia!"

The next moment he was stumbling towards the tent. As he passed through the canvas doors out of the strong sunlight, it seemed almost dark within the tent, and he stood for a moment whilst he grew accustomed to the shadows. Then he looked round. A little man dressed in dirty white breeches, with riding boots and a scarlet coat with gold lace, badly tarnished, was bowing the lady and her retinue into roped-off seats in the very front of the show, where was a rickety erection of iron rails. A decrepit curtain hung behind them, through which sounded the rumbling growls of some disgruntled beast.

Gunderson pushed his way forward towards the roped-off seats, but was stopped by the man in the scarlet coat, who thrust a whip in front of him. "Where ye goin', me son?"

Gunderson laughed as he indicated the seat he proposed to occupy.

"Resarved!" snapped the little Irishman.

"Oh, I'll pay!" laughed Gunderson again. "How much?"

"Nothing," answered the proprietor. "Her r'yal highness has booked all the stalls."

Olaf Gunderson looked towards the

veiled figure, the little queenly head of which was turned half to him, then he looked down the tent into the packed mass of half-naked Malays, and spoke again.

"You don't want to stick me in that crowd, do you?"

The little Irishman looked at his audience and grinned. "They are a nice bunch of scum, shure! But fwhat'll I do? Ye know these rajas. I'll get my throat shlit with a kris if I sthick ye up agin that gir-r-rl."

"Then let me stand here."

"No harm in that at all," laughed Paddy Malone. "But, for Hiven's sake, don't ye be leanin' agin that post, or ye'll fetch the tint down. Ye're too spashious altogether to rest agin a rotten stick like that."

"I'll not do that," laughed Gunderson back. And as the Irishman withdrew behind the curtain, he fell into stand-at-ease position, his eyes fixed on that dainty veiled form not more than half a score of yards away.

It was little enough that he could see, but he still stared, and turned his eyes away only when the bedraggled curtain was drawn jerkily up. Paddy Malone was standing on the rough stage behind, a little resolute figure with a heavy whip in one hand and a two-pronged fork in the other, whilst two stools of dirty white were set on either hand of him. His back was towards the audience, and he was looking towards a row of cages in the shadows, from one of which, growling sullenly, came an African lion. The beast was plainly in an ill mood, but as the showman cracked his whip, it stalked round the stage, Malone, pivoting on his heel, following its motions.

The trainer cracked his whip again, and the lion moved towards one of the white stools and, at a third crack, climbed upon it, and then sat on its haunches in the attitude of a stone lion over a gateway. The Irishman stepped back towards the bars, and with slow, stealthy steps a lioness emerged from the shadows about the cages, a sleek beast, which, like her mate, growled rumblingly as at an indignity to be thrust upon her.

Malone's whip cracked, but the lioness did not obey. Round and round that narrow place she stalked, ignoring the wooden throne which she was meant to occupy. Olaf Gunderson had a sudden sense that all was not well, and perhaps the audience sensed the same thing, for a great hush fell in the tent, which was broken only by the soft pad of

the lioness's feet as she stalked round and round.

Malone's whip cracked sharply, twice in quick succession, and the lioness stopped her march, whilst a low growl came from her tawny throat as she turned and faced him, crouching, her tail swinging savagely from side to side, her belly almost on the floor. Gunderson could not see the man's face, but he caught his whisper—

"Hiven save us! Fwhat's got the baste?"

Then the thing happened. Malone swiftly changed the prong from one hand to the other just as the lioness sprang. The weapon broke the charge a little, but the trainer was knocked heavily against the iron railing, which collapsed into the auditorium, the man falling with it. Instantly the lion on the dirty white stool dropped to the stage and stood there, growling and lashing its sides with its tufted tail.

A sharp cry of fear went up, and was speedily reduplicated, the frightened clamour of men mingling with the wild shrieks of scared women. Then the stampede began, the whole mass of natives surging to the door in wild confusion, shouting, fighting for egress, trampling those who went down, and once Gunderson caught the gleam of a kris as some man madder than the rest strove to clear a way for himself.

Someone brushed by the American—the first of the attendants of the girl sitting in the roped-off space. The others followed like a covey of frightened birds, making for that crush by the door, and Gunderson saw that their mistress was left alone. Even as he looked he beheld her rise to her feet, stumble over the end of the displaced benches and fall heavily. A second later he leaped forward, caught her up in his arms, and saw the little trainer spring on to the stage, prong in hand, to face the now maddened lions, whilst from the rear an Eurasian advanced carrying an iron bar which glowed red. He waited to see no more. Whilst the lion shook the tent with its frightful roars, carrying the girl in his arms, he strode to the tent wall, slit the canvas with a knife, and thrust his way through without noticing that in the operation the girl's veil was torn aside.

II.

OUTSIDE, the pandemonium was almost as great as it was within, the excited natives yelling madly round the doorway; but as

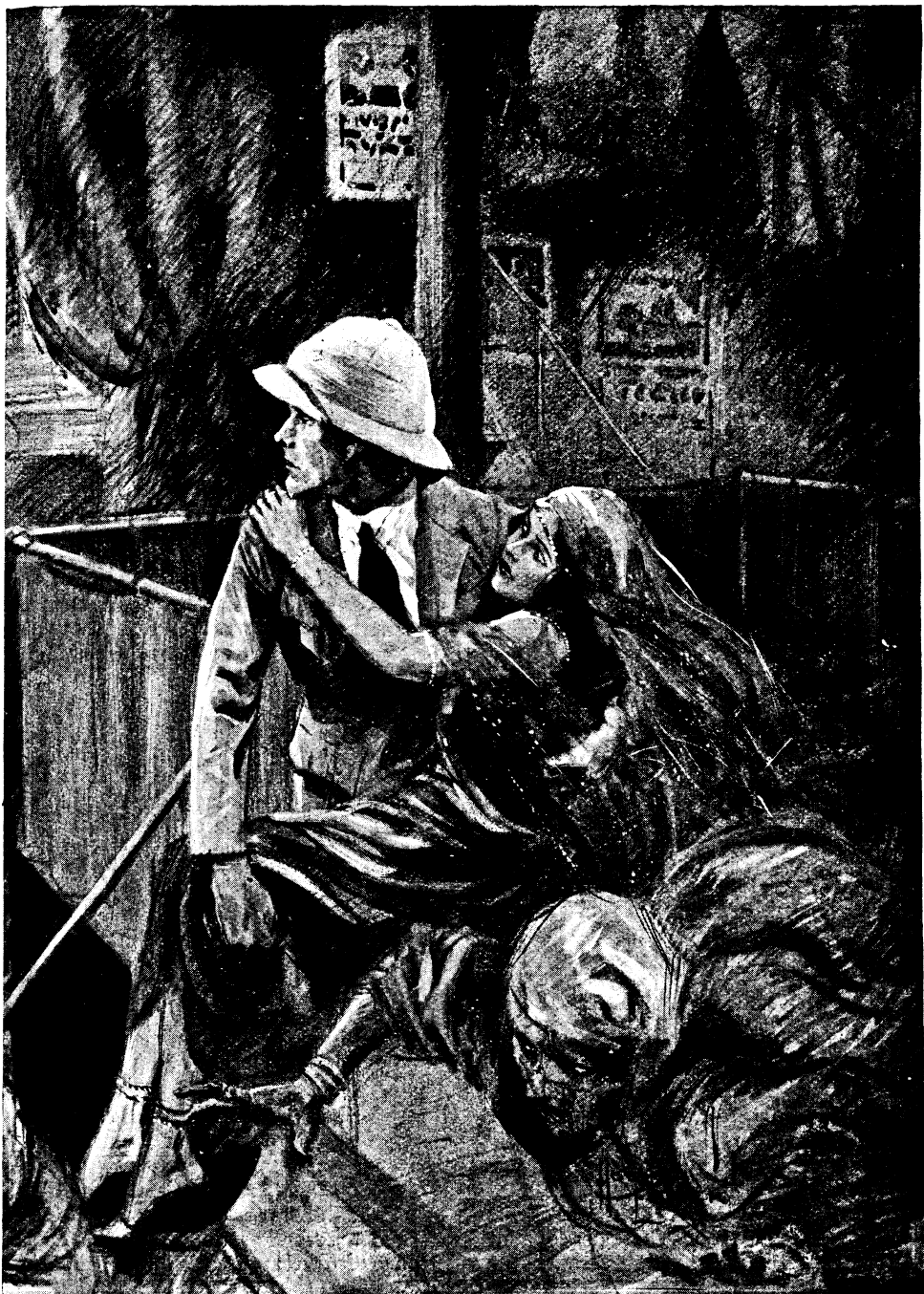


"A low growl came from her tawny throat as she turned and faced him, crouching, her tail swinging savagely from side to side."

they saw Gunderson emerge with the girl in his arms, the inspiration came to one or two of them, who began to slash the canvas with their crooked krises, offering new outlets to the maddened people within.

Olaf Gunderson, seeing that the situation

by the packed doorway was solving itself, and assured that the little Irishman was well able to deal with his rebellious beasts, gave his attention to his living burden. Still holding the girl in his arms, he thrust his way out of the crowd, and then looked down on



"He leaped forward, caught her up in his arms, and saw the little trainer spring on to the stage, prong in hand."

the unconscious face so near his own. He found it exceedingly fair—scarcely a shade darker than many an American face that he had known—and of a beauty like that of some rare tropic flower. The nose was straight and small, clean-cut as a cameo, the curving lips

were the colour of ripe pomegranate seeds, the face was oval, the little chin rounded and softly strong, whilst the lashes of the closed eyes were long and dark, and the ears in which twinkled the diamonds were small and set flat against the jet-black hair.

He stared in wonder, and whilst he still stared, hesitating what to do, a sigh came from the ruby lips, the eyelids trembled, and the long lashes were lifted, unveiling the wonderful eyes. For a moment he looked down at close range into the dark pupils in their blue-white setting, saw a startled look flash in them, which a second later gave way to one of wonder, then they were discreetly veiled by the long lashes. He felt the girl stir uneasily in his arms, and saw the rich blood flush the ivory face; then again the eyes opened, meeting his own in a glance that set his blood afire. Forgetful of her race, he stammered confusedly—

"Don't be frightened. You're all right. Where shall I take you?"

Scarcely had he spoken when he remembered that to her his words might be unintelligible, and instantly his mind set to work among the few Malayan words that he knew; but a second later the wonderful eyes opened again, and the ripe lips moved.

"Please set me down."

Her voice was like the music of lutes, soft and wooing, and, too thrilled to be amazed at her knowledge of his alien tongue, he answered in quick protest—

"But are you able—are you well enough to stand? You fainted, you know. Better lie still for a minute longer, then you will be better able to walk."

"But the burden——"

"No burden, I assure you," he interrupted quickly. "A flower could not be more light!"

The rosy blood flushed the soft cheeks afresh, then a gleam of laughter shone in the dark eyes, the ripe lips curved alluringly, and in either cheek there showed a quite delicious dimple—the *lêsong mati* of the Malayan lover. Olaf Gunderson stared down at her like a man bewitched, whilst she looked in wonder from the blue eyes to his hair, golden in the sunlight. Then once more their gaze met. Again in the dark irises there came the flash that he had seen before, that was like the bright gleam of the sun on the blade of a Malay kris. That glance went straight to his heart, shearing through the prejudices and conventions that hedge race from race, and in a madness of impulse, forgetful of the peril involved in the thing, scarcely knowing, indeed, what he did, he stooped and kissed the ripe lips. For a second, as it seemed to him, there was response; then suddenly the small lithe figure slid from his arms, and the next instant the girl had adjusted the gossamer fabric across

her face and stood before him a small figure of Oriental propriety, infinitely alluring in her hidden beauty and mystery.

For a second they stood so, without speaking, and as from his great height he looked down on the little queenly head, he caught the gleam of golden pins studded with rubies, which burned like fire under the sunlight, in the smooth black hair. Through the veil also he caught the clouded brightness of her eyes, and blindly stretched a hand towards her.

"No, no!" she said quickly, making a little gesture with her jewelled hand. "Behold, they come!"

He looked round. Two or three of her women were running towards her, at their heels a couple of male attendants, who carried the deadly kris shaped like a quivering flame. Gunderson, as the men drew nearer, saw their eyes regarding him malevolently, and prepared for trouble. But the girl noted their lowering looks, and broke into explanation, which was apparently accepted, for a moment later the whole party moved off towards the river, the girl giving a little gesture of farewell as she went. He saw them step into a boat, heard one of the women cry shrilly to someone behind him, then two more of the girl's female attendants flashed past and took their places in the boat, which instantly pushed off. He stared after it. Once he caught the gleam of jewels on a lifted hand, and then the boat was hidden from him by the tall reeds. A second later he was startled as from a dream by the sound of several shots following each other in rapid succession, and, turning on his heel, he went towards the great tent at a run.

III.

THE jabbering crowd, gathered at a discreet distance, blocked his way, but he thrust through them as a man brushes his way through standing corn, and, snatching a kris from a man's hand, ran straight for the opening of the tent. He had to pick his way through half a score of trampled forms, and for a second he looked round on the medley of overturned and broken benches. Then his eye sought the stage.

The little Irishman was standing there, pistol in hand, and a look of despair on his face. At his feet was the prone form of the Eurasian who had rushed to his help bearing the glowing bar, whilst further away lay the two poor brutes who were the cause of the disaster, their life-blood staining the dirty boards. As Gunderson moved forward,

the trainer saw him, and gave a gesture of despair.

"'Ts clane ruined I am !"

"What happened ?" asked the American in a sympathetic voice.

"The bastes wint stark, starin' mad, I'm thinking. Poor Dass here got his quit-tance, an' that other mongrel that was own brother to him got scared and ran away. I had to shoot the bastes to privint thim gettin' loose among thim howlin' dervishes outside, an' thim being the jewels av the show, this circus is bust !"

"That's a pity," said Gunderson sympathetically.

A gleam of something like humour came in the little Irishman's eyes. "Ye're not wantin' a brace of mangy tigers an' a jackal that can do the most marvellous tumblin' thricks, not to mention a monkey that ates wid a knife an' fork ?"

"Not at present," answered Gunderson gravely.

"Thin fwhat, in the divvle's name, is to be done wid the thruck ? I can't lit it loose on the populashion."

"I'm sure I don't know," answered Gunderson, divided between sympathy and admiration of the other's plucky facing of red ruin.

Malone looked towards the shambles at the entrance, then he asked suddenly : "Fwhat becamed of her r'yal highness ?"

"I got her out unhurt."

"The saints be praised for that mercy. I'd have bin kris-mate by night if aught had happened to the lady !"

"Who is she ?" asked Gunderson with an eagerness that he did not attempt to hide.

"Daughter of a swell raja up the river. One av the red-pepper snorters they rear in these parts, name av Kuala. Girl's name is Mëriam. She's a bit unusual, havin' bin educated by an English governess."

"Mëriam Kuala !" Olaf Gunderson mouthed the name as if it were music, and Malone looked at him sharply.

"Say, friend, ye'd betther take a cooler in the river if ye're gettin' fresh i' that quarter; maybe it'll save yer life. Anyway, the girl's going to be married in a fortnight to another av these red-pepper fellers further up the river—leastways, that's the talk av this God-forsaken burg."

"A fortnight—fourteen days !"

"Three hundred and thirty-six mortal hours in which to get yersilf carved up wid a kris. If ye'd like ut worked out in minutes——"

"Don't trouble," laughed Gunderson. "All the same, I'm going to marry that girl, and I'd like you to help."

"Help ye ? Is ut sayrious ye are ?"

"As serious as death."

The Irishman felt the back of his neck thoughtfully. "That's fwhat ut's like to ind in if ye git runnin' about after her r'yal highness. These raja fellers watch their women as if they was jewels."

"This one is a jewel."

"That manes that ye're clane daft, me friend." Then he looked round the wreckage of the tent and suddenly asked : "Fwhat's the job worth, me son ? Tell me that."

Gunderson named a sum in dollars that made the Irishman whistle and then ask sharply : "Fwhat's yer name ?"

"Olaf Gunderson, son of Alex——"

"The New York man ?"

The answer was a nod, and then the Irishman gripped his hand. "Ut's a bargain ! If ye'll come back in an hour or maybe two, I'll be ready for ye." And, light of heart, Olaf Gunderson went his way.

IV.

"THAT'S the palace, an', by the look av ut, 'tain't worth the price av me ole circus that was !"

Gunderson looked across the river to the building indicated. It was a poor enough safe for such a jewel as he had come to steal, being just a frame building with mat walls, lifted from the damp on wooden piles, with an open verandah and a flight of steps leading down to the river.

"It would be easy enough to cut a way through those walls."

"Aisy enough to git yersilf killed, ye mane ! If ye was caught in there, they'd flay ye alive. Stranglin' would be too merciful for ye."

"Then I must get in touch with Mëriam somehow."

"That's sinse. 'Tis watch an' wait ye must till the girl shows hersilf."

Two days they watched, saw much coming and going from the raja's house, and on the third morning beheld the girl go up the river bank to bathe, accompanied by two of her women.

"Now's yer chance. Off ye go, an' luck go with ye !"

Gunderson went, and, crossing the river, hid himself among the great ferns till the girl should return. He had to wait long,

but presently a burst of soft feminine laughter reached him, and at the right moment he stepped out from his hiding-place.

One of the women cried out and hurriedly veiled herself, whilst the other turned to her mistress, who had come to a standstill with eyes bright with witchery and allure-ment. Suddenly she spoke, and the two women separated, one going up the river and the other down to keep watch. Olaf Gunderson understood their going perfectly, and took a step forward.

"Flower of my heart!" he whispered, as he caught her ringless hand and kissed it.

Her face flushed divinely, and a soft light glowed in the dark eyes.

"There is danger if we are seen," she said in quiet warning. "To-morrow I am to be married——"

"Then," he interrupted, "I take you away to-night! Listen!" he continued, sure in his soul that she would agree. "When the house is still, I will be waiting for you at the steps. I will have a swift boat ready, and we will go to the English priest at Perak to be married. You will come? You will dare, Mëriam?"

She looked at him once, her dark eyes meeting his blue ones in level glance, then she whispered assent. He took her in his strong hands, lifted her from the ground, kissed her, and then left her to wait for night.

* * * * *

The night was extraordinarily still, and the fireflies were fitting to and fro. No sound save the murmur of the river broke the silence, but whilst the village behind lay in darkness, a light still burned in Raja Kuala's house, which the two white men watched anxiously from the motor launch moored up the river. Then at last it was extinguished, and at the same moment Malone became aware of a brightness spreading above the dark forest across the river.

"Hiven save us!" he whispered. "There's a moon!"

"Can't be helped. I'm going now, Paddy. Let the boat drift slowly down in five minutes' time, and be ready when I give the call."

"I won't fail ye, for me own neck's sake!"

Olaf Gunderson slipped ashore and silently and swiftly made his way along the path that he had followed in the morning. Near the raja's house he stopped to re-

connoitre. All was still, and the house in complete darkness. Reassured, he moved forward again, then in the growing light of the moon he saw a figure emerge from the shadows of the verandah. He slid to the foot of the steps silently.

"Flower of my heart!" he whispered.

The girl moved further out of the shadows, reached the top of the stairs, then an unexpected sound made Gunderson turn swiftly. Three dark figures had emerged from the corner of the house and were moving towards him. He caught the gleam of the krises, and knew that the moment was big with peril, but he did not hesitate. One swift glance over his shoulder assured him that the launch was in sight, and the next moment he flung himself upon the first of the attackers. The man jabbed at him with his kris, but Gunderson caught him round the waist, swung him over his head and flung him at his companions. One of them went down, but the other leaped in with his deadly weapon raised.

Gunderson dragged the pistol from his holster and, reluctant to fire, struck at the man. The Malay gave ground, and one of his fallen companions leaped to his feet and slipped behind the American, who, whistling sharply, raised his weapon to fire, whilst he tried to set his back to the steps.

And in that same moment the girl leaped. Her lover caught the flicker of the growing moonlight on the crooked kris in her hand, and laughed with pride at her courage. Then he himself leaped and smote a great blow at the man in front of it. The long pistol-barrel broke the blade of the native's kris and struck his head, so that the man went down like a log, just as a long, wailing shriek rang through the stillness of the night—a man's dying cry.

The American swung round. Mëriam Kuala stood with the kris in her hand, whilst at her feet lay the body of her father's man. There were sounds of commotion in the house behind them, and from the river in front came the Irishman's voice in hoarse appeal—

"For Hiven's sake, Gunderson——"

Olaf Gunderson's laugh of triumph as he lifted the girl from the ground broke on the words, and the next moment he was wading out to the launch. There were lights on the verandah now, a clamour of voices in the house, the sound of cries in the village behind, and the moon, lifting itself above the forest, turned the river to rippling silver. A spear struck the water not a yard away

from the wading man, a rifle cracked and the bullet ricocheted from the launch's side; but they gained it safely, and Olaf Gunderson laughed again as he dropped his lovely burden in the stern and clambered in himself.

A boat thrust out into the stream as the launch started forward. The rifle cracked again, and the bullet sang over their heads, but the engine-driven craft soon carried them beyond range. The moonlight grew broader. Looking back, Gunderson saw other boats afloat, but knew that he had little to fear from them. Then he looked down at the unveiled face nestling against his shoulder.

"Heart of my heart!" he whispered.

Mëriam Kuala nestled closer to him, and, as she did so, something slid from her lap and fell to the floor with a ring of steel. Looking down, her lover saw that it was the kris that she had carried, now dark with blood. Then as he thought that she must have saved his

life, looking down into the lovely face that now, with the moonlight on it, was more than ever like a flower, he kissed her.

Dawn was breaking as they reached the river's mouth and caught the teng of the sea. Junks and praus were flitting ahead, but the river behind them was empty of life, and as they swung southward for Perak, Paddy Malone laughed in glee.

"Diddled 'em! An', by the saints, I'll kiss the bride to-night."

And he did.

The kris, shaped like a quivering flame, and as bright, hangs on the walls of the Gunderson mansion in New York, an alien thing among many treasures. And sometimes Olaf Gunderson, watching his exotically-beautiful wife moving among her guests, smiles a little grimly to himself as he remembers it flickering red with blood, and wonders what these ladies would say if they were told that their flower-like hostess had once killed a man.



THE EGOTISTS.

THERE walks a shepherd singing
 Along the lanes of May;
 He sets the echoes ringing,
 And has no cares to-day.

But up the hill plods, tragic,
 A beggar, old and lame;
 He hums no stave of magic,
 He has no joys to name.

And wondrously thereover
 The lark sings in the blue—
 Unheeded by the lover,
 And by the beggar, too.

WALLACE B. NICHOLS.

SAMOA, YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

By A. SAFRONI-MIDDLETON,

Author of "No Extradition," "South Sea Foam," "Sestrina," etc.

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A N island in a tropic sea! "*Talofa! Aue! Aue! papalangi!*" cried the bronzed, handsome Samoan men, their sun-varnished bodies flashing as they, with their graceful womenkind, rose like tawny mermen, wet from the salt sea, and clambered from their outrigger canoes on to the deck of our ship. Standing there, chanting the melodious strains of Music's childhood, they strangely resembled Greek statuary. The background of mountains, mellowed by moonlight and charmed by the mystery of wild life and fierce happiness in the remote wooded depths—but who can describe in mere words the beauty and the wonder of a new world's romantic atmosphere caught on the negative of the mind? When first I arrived in Apia, the capital of Upolu, Samoa, Robert Louis Stevenson dwelt secure in his glorious self-exile at Vailima, and the Samoan chieftains were still busy building the Road of the Loving Heart that led to his exile homestead. In those wild years the lagoons by Safata village and by the shores shone like mirrors for miles and miles, vast gems that reflected the stately palms by day and mirrored the starry silence of the tropic skies by night. This was an island world of its own, as though one had travelled through space and stumbled across a lovely isle beyond the remote back alley of the Milky Way.

Dethroned King Matafaa brooded in the hills at Lauili, surrounded by a few faithful followers and *autiis* (priests), and at Manono dwelt Maleatoa, his rival. In the grog shanties by Apia beach the white men—mostly sailors from Australia, Shanghai, Callao and South America—congregated, drank strong rum, and banged their hairy fists on the bars as they told experiences wide and wonderful to the amused but

somewhat sceptical R. L. S. But the author of "Treasure Island" held his own with the best of them, and they were the finest romancers extant. He, too, banged his shabby peak cap on the bar in splendid unison, a smile on his æsthetic countenance as he ejaculated "Well, now!" to each hair-breadth narrative. But though the penniless sunburnt shellbacks turned each grog shanty into a modern Arabian Nights entertainment, it was not amongst the emigrant population that the profoundest of mysteries reigned. No, indeed! It took my very breath away, transformed me into a poet of the wilds, when first I stood alone amid the palms—about one mile from Apia—and peeped at the native youths and maids bathing in the lagoons. They were chanting their barbaric but poetic ritual songs to the gods of Atua, Oro and Tane and Tangalora, deities of the winds and seas, gods and goddesses with beautiful names—beautiful worshippers, too! Ah, I was young. How tell the wonder of it all? Yes, when I crept from the breadfruit shades and, with violin to my chin, caught the lilt of the eerie chants as I played at the starry footlights of those barbarian forest halls, I became a veritable pagan myself. But it was an innocent enough audience. True, the youths and maids were staunch to the faith of their fathers, true believers of a wild creed which, after all, was a symbol of a true worship of God Himself which has existed under many, many names.

"Why do that, Niue?" I asked of one charming maid, as she stood tiptoe on the moonlit reef, her night-dark tresses blowing hither and thither to the hesitating winds. Voiceless I listened as the covey of girls rhythmically swayed their golden-tinted bodies, their tresses blowing oceanwards. It was then that I first heard the legend that

told how on certain *Atua* nights the winds were the breath of the gods that came to blow the maiden's hair, an unerring compass to tell from which direction the handsome lover would come sooner or later. Others held tinted shells to their ears, beautiful shells that glittered in the white moon's light, whilst the superstitious maids and youths listened to the murmurs, the low monotonous of unremembered songs—the voices of dead fishermen who had been lost in the

cherubs at my knees clapped their hands in curious delight.

“Ah, *Tusitala* of the long-stick (violin bow), its body did soon crumble to dust, leaving the shell only. And one day the shining shell did heave softly, as though a big rat caught beneath sought in terror to escape out into the world of sunlight. And, O *papalangi*, when the sun was setting on the ocean's edge, where shine *Tangalora's* eyes, and while the goddess *Atui* lifted



A SAMOAN HOME.

great *matagis* (storms), and who still slept unloved under the deep *moani-ali* (ocean).

And here is the story of creation that I heard when the handsome youth *Tamafanga* sat by the village pump at the end of the old hut town and told how, long ago, a big turtle crawled out of the ocean on to the Samoan Isles and, settling its bony self beneath a palm, out of the blaze of the hot sunlight, died, as all things must die.

“And what happened then, O *Tamepango*?” I asked, as the half-dozen dusky

the crimson robes of western fire so that they might be woven into the great robe of dead sunsets that *Oro*, first-god-of-the-sky, wears, the shell was lifted so high that six *fantoës* and *fatiis* (baby boys and girls) escaped with a jump of delight out of its dark shelter and cried in wonder: “Oh, here we are, come from shadow-land to these lovely isles!” And the gods *Oro*, *Langi*, and *Tane* and *Tangalora*, who had made the new children out of the light of broken moons and old sunsets, were pleased

to see these new children for a new world taste the coconuts and find them good to eat and to drink. So did the first people come to dwell on this isle."

I came to love those poetic-minded youths and maids, and they me. Night after night I attended their festivals. Ah, the tempestuous solos as old Tembross Tembross, the finest timpani soloist extant, banged the barbarian drum! Even at that early day I had travelled far, living amongst the Maoris in New Zealand and with other primitive people, and so I was an adept in

the sea-caves and moonlit palms of their wild shores into some old maestro's stormy, melodious brain. Ah, those haunting strains, as though the moon moaned and the giant breadfruits and banyans laughed eerie cadenzas down the sacred groves of heathenland!

I think I had been nearly six months in Apia, visiting Savaii Isle and Upolu at intervals, when I took up my dwelling permanently in a native hut by Apia's beach (near where the bandstand is to-day). The host of my new home was a shell



SAMOAN GIRLS DANCING THE HULA.

the art of being a true vagabond and courteous fellow-creature when visiting the hut towns of Southern Seas. No foolish misgivings perturbed my soul when I calmly divested myself of all the artifices peculiar to civilisation, when I became a pagan at will, retaining only my clothes, since I was subject to colds following a severe chill at sea. The high chiefs of old Safata and Maona and Chelo village lifted their hands to the forest height and blessed me in the thought that I so easily memorised the ear-haunting strains—music blown out of

collector by profession, one who sold beautiful pearly merchandise to the sailors and passengers who arrived monthly. The walls of my host's hut were composed of coral cement and shells, the floors paved with multitudinous shining convolutions, small shells and vast shells—shells, shells everywhere! But it is not the wonder of the shells and the rich seaweed odours and weird glamour of that weird artist's rare collection that awaken my memory. In that shell-artist's home I first met the grand old tribal chief O Le Langi. O Le

Langi was a poet of distinct genius, and dwelt in a hut close by—a neighbour to be proud of, by faith! It would take reams, reams of reminiscences to tell all the wonders that I heard from the lips of that glorious old tattooed literary critic and poet of the Southern Seas. Night after night I gently, almost timorously, knocked at the mahogany door of that half-clad tawny Byron of Samoa. No neighbours in all the lands of all the earth were ever on better terms than O Le Langi and I. Nor did

Impossible to describe O Le Langi's expressive physiognomy, or the proud mien of that grand relic of some Imperial Rome of the South Seas. Is kingship only a name? The starry magnificence of those fine old eyes and the sovereign majesty of the wrinkled, lofty brow said otherwise. And who could gainsay the pictorial evidence of the red-and-blue signorial tattoo that adorned the muscular frame and chest, that tawny breathing manuscript, that veritable "Who's Who"—a curious page



NATIVE TRADING BOATS.

I scorn the high critical praise that I received from that old barbarian poet's shining eyes when I entertained his ear with extemporisations on my violin. Most wonderful of all were the legends that he told—legends that were part of the reigning creed of his boyhood, in that time ere the South Pacific Islands came under the influence of sailormen and missionaries, emigrants who successfully flouted the magic of the blue skies and the wonders of island mythology.

of the peerage of heathenland? O Le Langi was a peer of peers, none could doubt that, and sitting there in his hut on the sultry tropic night, he bowed his head and sighed, and once again placed his lips on the frayed edge of his revered sacred mat. The broken waves of moonlight on the reefs and in the palms outside revealed the barbaric relics, war clubs and obsolete guns on the walls, as, squatting in the chieftain's presence, I watched with awe.

"And why, O mighty O Le Langi, do

you love that old mat-heirloom?" I inquired, at the same time gazing at the sacred mat, so frayed through being kissed

the *tamanu* and *osia* sprays, Langi, the aged chieftain, squared his shoulders, throwing me a quizzical glance as I held my nose, for lo! that old mat's odour pervaded the air, and answered:

"'Tis a god-mat, blessed of the *atuiis*, for the glory of the great dead; high chiefs and *tausalas* (high-born women) dwell in it. Thou art a foolish youth to think thus to laugh at thy betters."

Reddening deeply at the chieftain's rebuke, I hastily offered my apologies, while he drew his beautifully designed *tappa* robe about his shoulders.

"But why, O high chieftain O Le Langi, is this particular *atua*-mat so beautiful, so revered by you?" I asked again, as I realised that its odour was, to him, one of exquisite incense. Then, by many eloquent gestures and words, the aged pagan enlightened my profound ignorance as to the manifold virtues of that frayed symbol of the beautiful. Lifting the dirty mat in an attitude of much reverence from the floor, he carried it outside the hut, at the same time bidding me follow him.

"See here, and here, O *papalangi*," he said in solemn tones, as he pointed to the frayed skeins that waved like shining gossamer in the warm night's zephyrs. And, following the direction of the chieftain's pointing finger, I discovered that the old mat was not such a bit of rubbish, after all. For the Samoan chieftain held the mat up again and again in the moonlight, and, pointing to the silvery and golden threads, said: "Here is all that remains of Seako Niué; and this dark lock is all that survives of Ramoa Stembo; and here, and here, dwells the once-living glory of my own god-father, he who reigned a mighty king on the isles far to the eastward, a sea's depth of moons ago." And as I gazed on the threads of hair of dead chieftainesses and chiefs—woven thickly into the edges of the old mat—I, too, felt deep reverence for that ragged relic, the weird heirloom of a mighty nobility of the South Seas.

Alas, silent men buried O Le Langi and his mat amidst his beloved hills by Apia twenty years ago, and I believe that a thick coral stone still stands hard by Safata village, a humble cross on which are inscribed the old chieftain's name and his virtues.

As for the rest, all is long forgotten and buried by the ruthless tramp of civilisation. The sacred banyan groves no longer echo the festival lamentations and the old glory of native song. But still the sea rolls in



Photo by]

[Topical.

A NATIVE PRINCESS WEARING AN ORNAMENTAL HEAD-DRESS.

and rubbed by Langi and his ancestors for Heaven only knows how many generations. Then, whilst the sea wind sighed fitfully in



A SAMOAN BELLE.

European fashions, yearned to gain possession of a pair of brown stockings. But many years must pass ere the wild beauty and inflexible self-respect inspired by deep belief in the old Polynesian legends, etc., is replaced by the mechanical routine that will make the Pacific natives seem "wholly respectable."

Though the Samoan temples have been desecrated and the revered idols burned, though the old-fashioned wooden bee-hive-shaped homesteads are mostly replaced by coral cement buildings, the Samoan children are reared as they have been reared for the last thousand years. Go inland by night, a few miles south-west of Vae Mountain—where Robert Louis Stevenson sleeps, fenced in by the blue seas and starry horizons, his everlasting requiem played by the almighty bellows of the Pacific winds—and the festival songs still echo in the breadfruit valleys. Samoan men, tired out through toiling in the hot sunlight on the coconut and coffee plantations, squat in rows, watching the *siva* dance, fantastic in full swing, as the darting fireflies imitate the barbaric whirls in miniature down the sacred banyan groves. It is then that the devout Christianised

on moonlit nights, like tides of silver foam breaking silently on the barrier reefs off Apia, and still a few believe in the virtues of the gods of their fathers, and secretly voice forth their weird songs—songs that tell the melancholy of long-forgotten things and the far-off tropic stars. And so I would arise and tramp down the track of my dreams to those far-off tropic isles of wonderful mythology. I would build me a hut within sound of the waves and sighing *tamanu* trees, and hear the Samoan girls sing the songs of sunrise and innocence.

II.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S death occurred when the great change from semi-heathenism to civilisation was fast creeping the length of the Polynesian Islands. One by one the aged chiefs died, were lamented, buried, and forgotten, until the time came when "advancement" was so advanced that native youths denied all knowledge of the customs of their fathers. The *lava-lava* of scanty width—but wide modesty—was thrown aside for the blue calico gown, a garment suggesting physical charms, and therefore gracefully donned by the native girls, who, falling before the lure of



A SAMOAN WARRIOR.

natives who were the dancers of another age, recapture their fame, step on to the *pae-pae* (bamboo stage) and perform a song and dance that surely thrill the soul of the tourist with green socks and a snapshot camera. To-day those backsliding nights-out are called "galas"; but they are prim survivals of the old *siva* and *meeké* dances, survivals of fierce heathen days when the sacrificial altars flamed to the pulse of the death-drum and to all that upheld the majesty of pagan justice.



A HARBOUR VIEW, SHOWING TYPES OF SURROUNDING VEGETATION.

There was no more fascinating sight in the Pacific Islands than when a pretty girl danced a Samoan minuet with a handsomely tattooed partner from the next village. Robed in her multi-coloured robe (reaching to one inch below the knee), the maid's rhythmical movements to the tempo of the *vivv*-flutes and pulsing drums were the poetry of motion. But all Samoa was not dancing that night. Beyond the forest's edge, near Tao-Tao citadel, many of the villages were silent, hardly a leaf stirring in the shades of the feathery palms and tasselled breadfruit, all illuminated by

the ghostly radiance of tropic moonlight. The Daylight Bill was passed in the Samoan Parliament long ages ago, enforcing island folk to sleep sound—since they must rise long ere the sun heaves its golden shoulder over the edge of the Pacific Ocean. But even those sleeping, silent villages have unexpected eerie moments, and it would seem that they are composed of thatched dwellings of another age whereto awful phantoms come trooping back to dream and perform monstrous tricks. For queer things happen

when the *o le manu* (night-ingle) breaks the stillness of the sleeping village, taps its beak on a fairy-bell in the sylvan shade, and then seems to tinkle its money-bags, full of coins made from the mintage of silvery moonlight. It is then that some aged Samoan man or woman, lured by the bird's song in the lagoon's palms, creeps from the sleeping-mat. For the *o le manu's* call is a sure sign that a heathen deity lurks in the branched glooms. For a moment he, or she, raises tawny arms to the sky and, with eyes alight with fear, mutters the old tribal ritual in solemn tones. Whatever the failings of the old pagan creed, its adherents were sincere enough, and the next moment the superstitious native had prostrated and then hastened back to the bed-mat, the gods appeased.

Weird ideas and monstrous imagination? Well, withal, the brown folk differ little at heart from our

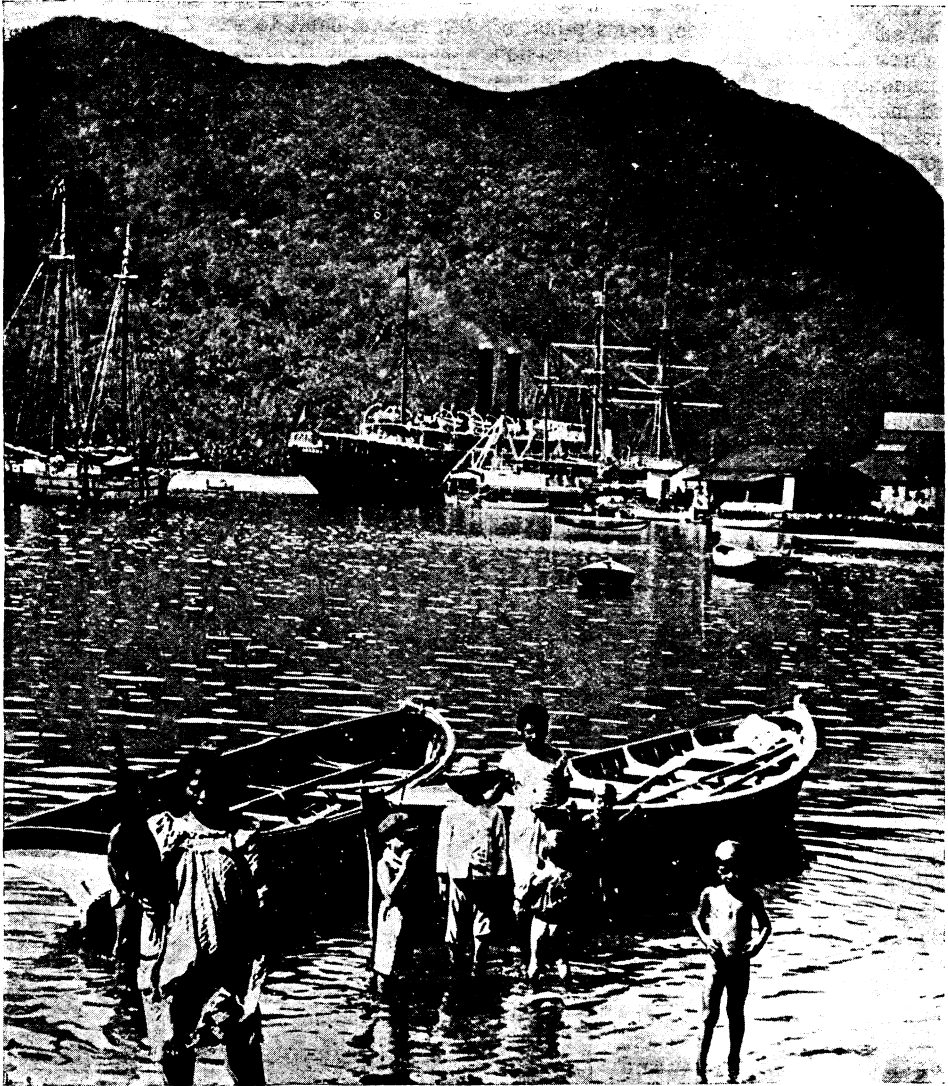
noble selves. They, too, love deeply, and sorrow and remember in the night of age.

It is only when the deep-sea steamers arrive from Sydney bound for San Francisco that the primitive peace is wholly destroyed. It is then that the shore townships, inland as far as Malua, are a-hum with avaricious ambition—men, women and youths seeking to sell their pearly merchandise and luscious fruits to the wandering tourists. And long past the hour of midnight the waters off Apia's beach are thronged with outrigger canoes, paddled by handsome men who sing ceaselessly—sea-peddlars bringing

passengers and sailormen ashore. "*Talofa! papalangai. Aue! Aloah!* Buy my corals, my nice red beads! Remarkable cheap fellow!" cries the graceful semi-savage as he jumps on deck wet from the waves, his golden locks (dyed with coral lime) flashing

perpetual fire of *Ahi* (the burning mountains of Savaii Isle) throwing out crimson threads of flame to the violet midnight blue.

They've built a bandstand by Apia's beach now, a steel-ribbed thing—something that gave Romance a shock—and



THE HARBOUR AT PANGO PANGO, TUTUILA.

in the dim moonlight. To the imaginative mind it seems that handsome terra-cotta-hued mermen leap from the moonlit waves to greet the stranger even before one touches the shore that looks like some weird dream cut out of blocks of moonlight, a poetic effect that is deepened by the

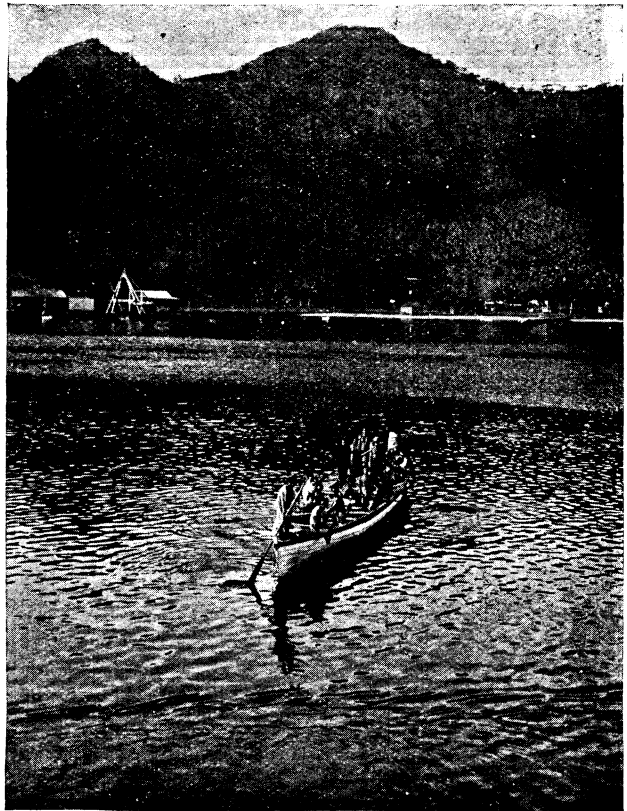
when the big ship's anchor goes up, the mixed band performs the latest London success. Oft-times the old chiefs listen to selections from "*Tristan und Isolde*" and "*Tännhauser*," a delightful poetic grin on their lips as they lean on their war-clubs. They are the finest music critics extant.

'Tis said that a man who beat the death-drum in the fierce man-hunting Hervey Isles sixty years ago swears by Beethoven's "Romance in F major," but scorns the Bach "Chaconne" for violin solo. Times have changed indeed! O Le Tao's grandson, he who played the magic conch-shell when I was a lad, leads off the native band with solo cornet. He, too, seems proud of the new times. Indeed, the new generation strenuously deny that their grandfathers and mothers once sat in the grand undress-circle of stark innocence. Samoans are proud of the white-walled Government buildings that stand on the palm-clad elevations beyond the American and German stores of Apia. The mission room's corrugated tin roof has almost disappeared, and is now tiled in up-to-date style. Even the *calaboose* (prison-house) looks imposing, almost sumptuous, and is much admired by the natives, some of whom deem it no small honour to have been incarcerated within its high walls.

The good Apia photographer is besieged daily by native youths and maids, who vie eagerly with each other to display their physical beauty in front of the camera. His clients do not wish to miss the great time and tide in the human affairs of Samoan youth. What greater than the thought that they will one day adorn the pages of a tourist's book—the book that will be published in the far-off cities of the great world where white men dwell, and where the mission men hail from? So fair are the photographer's clients that he is compelled to tone the prints to the darkest hue, otherwise who would believe that those fair, refined-featured maids and youths are the sons and daughters of South Sea cannibals?

A great class distinction exists in the Samoan Isles. No *tausala* (high-class maid) would deign to flaunt her charms before a "magic eye" (camera lens). The high-born youths and maids scorn such low-caste means and ways. Their high birth is conspicuous in their dignified demeanour and the Grecian grace of their form and

movements, which show their often royal descent. Of inherent moral dignity in mind and body, and scrupulously clean in habit, they grace the lovely landscapes of their native lands. None can mistake them. Attired in blue-and-yellow striped *tiputa* (robes), their high-coiled hair garlanded with hibiscus blossoms, a pitcher on the shoulder and one hand to the hip, they resemble some of the Biblical characters represented in well-known pictures as they pass and repass down the forest tracks, taking fresh water home. Others stir the delicious *poi-poi*, a kind of Polynesian porridge, a scented mixture composed of taro, yams, and breadfruit pulp. The elders, men and women, squat by their doorless homes and with marvellous dexterity weave *tappa*



A NATIVE BOAT.

cloth and *sennet* baskets of artistic design, singing ceaselessly as they toil. Samoa is the isle of song. Catch a Samoan unsinging, and you can be assured that things are indeed sad with him. They extemporise melodies as easily as they breathe—songs

of fishing, songs of paddling, songs of blighted love, of battles long ago, and dead desire, and of sad old women who remember little children in the nights.

A weird-looking old witch-woman dwells perhaps in some lonely cave. She is the Samoan equivalent of the Piccadilly crystal-gazer and of spiritualism up to date. In the lagoon by her doorless grass house old men, women, and girls and youths peep and see wondrous shapes that queerly resemble themselves, and show them what *they* will look like in shadowland. The witch-woman claps her tawny hands and prophesies queer things, and so gets rich.

When I, not so long ago, stood by Safata village and studied the many changes, that which awoke the deepest emotions within me was the sight of the village poet, standing as of old on the village stump of a forum, the grand old high-chieftain Tautirot, the Samoan bard. I found him in this later day wandering alone, one of the last of his kind. With hands lifted to the starry sky, his picturesque but faded *tappa* robe—like a Roman's toga—slung over his left shoulder, he poured forth from his lips the poetry of shadowland, his really wonderfully poetic brain inspiring striking similes and phrases of singular beauty. Undoubtedly a genuine bard—possessing shaggy eyebrows like crags that sheltered the glowing beacons of long-forgotten song, and well tattooed, he looked a poet. Well reviewed by capable critics, who show their appreciation with munificent gifts of *tappa* and silver coins, he still wanders alone, homeless, amongst his native hills, where every flower is a symbol of life's briefness. Great beyond words was my pleasure to again meet that South Sea Homer of the nineteenth century! There he stood, bathed in moonlight and the weird glow of innumerable coconut-oil lamps suspended from the palms and banyans. Approaching him, my heart in my mouth, I inquired whether he recalled his old contemporary—one by name O Le Langi, poet and philosopher of the South Pacific? Lowering his hands with a start, he ceased his impassioned speech and surveyed me as though unhearing and unseeing, as a statue might gaze. As he stood there, voiceless on the village stump, not a tremor of suspected recognition was revealed upon his august countenance. But I, being of lesser mould, gripped his hand and said: "Hail, O mighty Tautirot, 'tis surely you!"

Only a Samoan tragedian, before the footlights of his native stars, could incline the head and assume that expression of huge solemnity as did Tautirot, last of his ancient line.

"O Tusitala, 'tis I. Who else can I be?" he sighed, his wrinkles relaxing into a living map of wondering recognition as he went on: "Thou art still straight as a palm and good to look upon, fair Tusitala."

Critically did he eye my grey-suited form and brand-new topee. Then I strode with him under the adjacent palms, and the village youths watched amazed as we spoke on, recalling this and sighing over the briefness of that.

"And so they, our brother-singers of other years, are with Tangalora and Oro?" I interposed in a low voice.

"*Papalangi*, they dwell with Tangalora and Oro, far away, beyond the last great *ridi* of all the night."

"Beyond the last great *ridi* of all the night," I repeated in sympathetic reverence, much emotion in my heart as the old Samoan's lips quivered, for he and I and the others had been friends in the old years. Then I unknowingly plunged a spur into the old Samoan's weakness. "The finest poet of his day was he, O Le Langi," I said. There was no response from that old child of Nature. He simply lowered his head, and then, after a considerable pause, gently hinted that much of his old rival's best poetry and song was sheer plagiarism from his own well-known extemporisations!

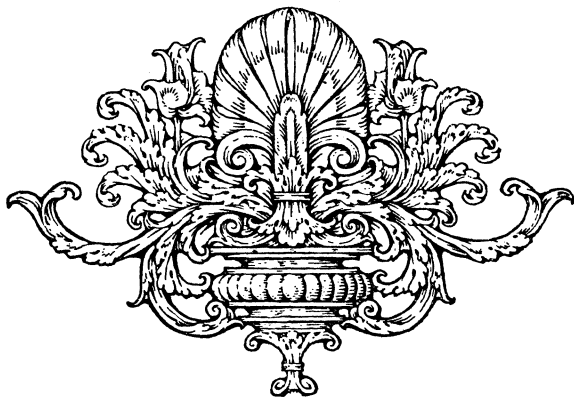
"True enough, we poets and musicians borrow overmuch, one from the other," I ventured, ere I added in reflective tones: "But Langi is dead, and the coral grows and the palms wave their plumes to Oro and Tangalora, O brother." I spoke in the old flamboyant style, a style that I had acquired when I, as a wandering troubadour seeking legends and native ballads, was much sought and hired by the old Samoan bards, who wore few clothes and published their verse on the brains of sweet-voiced children of the forest. Hearing me speak thus, Tautirot was reminded of those quixotic grand old days when he and I and melancholy Langi, and Giovanni the Italian guitarist, roamed from village to village and isle to isle, I extemporising on the violin as they spouted forth grand declamatory verse on the village forum-stumps.

Ah, memory of Langi and Tautirot! While your kind remain, and roam your lovely lands, the island legends will survive

and linger in the hearts of romantic youths, making South Sea lands full of wonderful songs—songs that are built out of the harmonies of the resounding seas and the sorrow of life's brief day.

And still the Pacific seas roll in on moonlit

nights, foaming in the hurricanes far away like ghostly tides of silver surging silently over the barrier reefs off Apia. And so I would arise and steal down the track of my dreams to the far-off tropic isles of wonderful mythology.



PROPHECY.

IN the wreck of the eldest things, the waste
 Of a world that is bent on change,
 I have a thought that will not haste,
 And its wings are wide of range;
 A foresight fair and a far foretaste
 Of a thing neither new nor strange.

For a man shall walk on an April night
 A million years from now,
 Watching a cloud in the heavenly height
 And a planet that burns below,
 And muse on a maid's eyes holy-bright,
 And the hair that clouds her brow.

MICHAEL WILSON.

VALERIE FRENCH

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "Anthony Lyveden," "Berry and Co.," "Jonah and Co.,"
"The Brother of Daphne," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS.—The great woodland estate of Gramarye, in the Cotswolds, was on fire, but when the news spread nobody cared, for the house was tumbling down, the park was deserted, and their owner, Colonel Winchester, was in a madhouse, to which local opinion held that he had been driven by some malign influence in this wilderness of a property. The mental breakdown of Anthony Lyveden while working for him was ascribed to the same cause. From a spur of the Cotswolds a man looked down upon the holocaust, but cared no more than anyone else, for he had lost his memory. Sitting at his feet was a small rough-haired dog for whose presence he could not account, and both were in the last stage of exhaustion when found, struggling on their way in search of food, by two privates of the R.A.S.C., in charge of a motor lorry, who sheltered and befriended them and gave them a lift to the next village. There the kindly landlord of an inn gave them hospitality, assuring Anthony Lyveden that he need not pay anything until able to do so. After bestowing upon himself and the Sealyham the names of "Jonathan" and "Hamlet," in his inability to remember even his own name, Anthony Lyveden set forth to seek his fortune. About this time Lady Touchstone wrote to her kinsman, Cardinal Forest, "Poor Anthony Lyveden's body was found a fortnight ago. We had him buried at Girdle," but, being on the Continent, she had not yet heard of the burning of Gramarye, and was referring to the search for Anthony, who had disappeared, and to the discovery of a dead body assumed to be his. She had gone abroad with her grief-stricken niece, Valerie French, who had been engaged to be married to Anthony, and at Dinard they made the acquaintance of an English girl, André Strongi'th'arm—the *fiancée* of Colonel Winchester—who gave Valerie a profoundly moving account of Anthony's life and work at Gramarye, and of the baleful influence of the place upon his brain. A day later André was recalled to England by the news of Colonel Winchester's sudden recovery. Meantime Anthony Lyveden and his dog fell in with Sir Andrew Plague, K.C., upon the Oxford Road, and by this chance encounter Anthony made for himself a friend indeed. Rough and hot-tempered, but kindly, the famous lawyer took a liking to "Jonathan Wood," and, when he learned that, having lost all memory of his own identity, he was beginning life again, engaged him as his secretary. André had been deeply in love with Anthony, but without awakening any response from him; now, however, that he was apparently dead, she determined to try to forget the matter and devote herself to her *fiancé*, Richard Winchester. At the latter's first meeting with her new friend, Valerie, he astounded the two girls by casually remarking that from a cab in Fleet Street he had just seen Anthony Lyveden, only to lose him again among the byways of the Temple. To the answer, "But he's dead! He's buried at Girdle," Winchester replied, "Nonsense! I'd know him anywhere. Besides, he had his dog with him—a Sealyham, with a big, black patch on his back." Inquiries were at once set on foot, and Winchester himself conducted a house-to-house investigation of the Temple, but all in vain, until a chance acquaintanceship with Lady Touchstone led to Sir Andrew's recognition of a photograph of Anthony in her drawing-room. Even then conversational cross-purposes prevented Lady Touchstone's understanding the lawyer's allusions to the portrait, and it was only after his departure that Valerie, on hearing of the conversation, rang up Sir Andrew's number on the telephone and asked: "Is that Sir Andrew Plague's?" "It is," replied Anthony Lyveden. So Anthony and Valerie met. He did not remember her, and she would not tell him that they had been engaged, but the moment he saw her he loved her with all his heart. The next day he recognised André, riding alone. He remembered her and recalled distinctly that there had been something between them; but that was all. Nervously he accosted her, and from her manner and speech, no less than from the fact that she alone had waked his memory, made sure that when he disappeared he had been pledged to her. As for André, knowing nothing of his loss of memory, she read in his demeanour a declaration of love.

VI. POOR PLAYERS.

IT irks me, Sirs, that I cannot go two ways at once. But then no man can do that—not even the puppeteer. I have my cap of darkness: my boots are many-leagued: at a nod from me, the sun will stand still in his heaven. I should, I suppose, be satisfied. Yet am I not content, because I have sent one puppet East and another West, and I would follow them both. . . . Since I cannot do that, I must choose. And I choose the lady. And when I have done with her, by your leave, we will

have Time back and follow her startled squire about his business.

André rode down the Row as a girl in a trance.

What did it mean? She had always been apprehensive about her next meeting with Lyveden. The last had been so painful that the next must of necessity be most embarrassing. When a girl has told a man that she loves him and the man has thereupon promptly shown her the door, and when, because he will not kiss her, she has taken the law into her own small hands and kissed him wildly upon the mouth, it is hardly

to be expected that their next encounter will be convivial. It is still less probable that the man will have executed a complete *volte face* and, apparently regretting his rejection of her advances, will instantly reopen the matter, apologise for his behaviour and, figuratively speaking, take the girl's two arms and put them about his neck. Yet that is precisely what had happened. And Valerie French, to whom he had been engaged, who was simply living to see her lover again, was never referred to 'When I tell you everything, you'll understand . . . It's hard to explain.' What did it mean? What did it all mean?

André realised suddenly that she was afraid. The meaning was plain—written in shining letters upon the wall. And she was afraid to read it. It was too—too big. . . .

Slowly she raised her eyes.

WHEN ANTHONY LYVEDEN WAS SICK, IT WAS VALERIE FRENCH WHO WON HIM BACK TO HEALTH. OUT OF GRATITUDE HE ASKED HER TO MARRY HIM. ALL THE TIME HE LOVED ANDRÉ STRONGT'H ARM. AT LENGTH HE COULD BEAR HIS POSITION NO LONGER, AND SO HE JUST DISAPPEARED.

The thing was plain. There was no other explanation. It was unfortunate—very, but it had happened before. . . . 'The marriage which had been arranged will not take place.'

Arrived at Hyde Park Corner, André dismounted and gave her horse to a groom. Then she crossed Piccadilly and entered the Green Park.

Ordinarily she drove: but to-day she wanted to think. She must not be rushed. Her hotel stood in the danger zone: there she could be visited, addressed. . . . And she was not ready: she must have time.

She made her way eastward slowly, biting her lips.

Was ever a girl so placed?

She was engaged and pledged up to the hilt, and now Anthony had come and turned engagements and pledges into a bundle of vanities.

Her engagement to Winchester was nothing. As she had given, so she could take away. She was sorry—for Richard's sake. It would shake him up badly. Still, he would understand. It was a nasty business—rather like shooting a horse. But it was just as easy. What was presenting a truly formidable front was her allegiance to Valerie French.

So far as Valerie was concerned, every-

thing seemed to have combined to make her triumph more ghastly than any defeat. If only Valerie had been less mad about Anthony Lyveden—if only she and Valerie had not become such friends—if only their friendship had not been founded upon their love for the same man—above all, if only she had not at first disputed Valerie's right, and then renounced her claim in Valerie's favour. . . . The omission of any one of those protases would have made all the difference. As it was, Valerie stood in her path, radiant and unsuspecting, and she was going deliberately to ride the girl down. And it was not her fault. Fate had her bridle-rein. . . . Fate And when the murder was over, Fate was going to libel her—publish an infamous slander of what she had done and she would have no redress. She was going to be called treacherous shameless accursed Fate was going to indicate excitedly a hundred other paths she might have chosen, show that she had gone out of her way to ride down Valerie, raise his false eyes to heaven and lament her sin.

Was there ever such a coil—such a monstrous, tragical coil?

André thrust it aside and gave herself up to a contemplation of her amazing fortune. Anthony loved her Anthony all the time—and she had not known it. He had fought not to, and he had been borne down. Once he had turned her away: now he had come, stepping out of the sweet of the morning, straight to her side himself Anthony What if she had to pay for such a prize? What if she was to be slandered—vilified? God in heaven, it was worth while! It was worth *anything*. The price was not even high. No price could be. Such profit was above price She remembered the evening when she had seen him first—how they had passed together up Gallowstree Hill, and he had talked of his work, and she had challenged his zeal. . . . Then she had gone to his cottage—because she loved him, and he, *because he loved her*, had sent her away. . . .

André entered the Berkeley and passed upstairs. . . .

A letter addressed by Valerie's hand lay on her table. The girl ripped it open with shaking fingers.

I've been trying frantically to get you all the evening. Anthony's FOUND. Isn't it wonderful? And he's as right as rain, André, as right as rain. Only—he's lost his memory. He can't remember Gramarye or anything. He



"She crossed Piccadilly and entered the Green Park. Ordinarily she drove: but to-day she wanted to think.
She must not be rushed."

didn't even know his own name. Which, of course, explains why he didn't answer the advertisements. One word, just in case I don't see you before we all meet. He has no idea, of course, that he and I were engaged. ON NO ACCOUNT TELL HIM, OR GIVE HIM THE SLIGHTEST HINT. I rely upon you. You can understand why. And dine with us to-morrow at Claridge's—you and Richard—without fail. Say eight o'clock. . . .

For a long time André stared at the document. Then she lifted her eyes. . . .

AND WHEN HE WAS PRESENTLY DISCOVERED, IN DESPERATION HE PRETENDED TO VALERIE THAT HE HAD LOST HIS MEMORY. THEN HE MET ANDRÉ STRONGITHARM. . . .

Now that the meaning was confirmed, what was to be done ?

If André had been at once less confident and less infatuate, she would not have gathered so naively the chaff into her garner and trampled the wheat of truth under her feet. Still, since she had had no say in her construction, and nobody else had had any in her development, I do not think she can be blamed for her egregious mistake. This was made in good faith. And in good faith she decided that Valerie must be told the terrible truth. She was faintly surprised that Anthony had shrunk from this duty. Then the beam in her eye again interfered with her vision, and she recalled the convenient fact that it was not yet six months since he had cast off brain-fever. Still, Valerie must be told, and he must tell her. . . .

She sent a wire to Lyveden that afternoon.

Joshua will be by the Albert Memorial to-morrow at seven o'clock.

When Winchester returned from the country at half-past five, his fiancée sent down word that she was in bed. Winchester raised his eyebrows and pulled his moustache. Then he went out and bought her the finest roses that he could procure. And presently, knowing nothing of his invitation to dinner, he dined at his club.

* * * * *

Lyveden was late for breakfast that sunshiny morning. Had he hastened he might have been in time : but, instead, he tramped slowly, as a man who is tired.

His brain was no longer labouring and losing its labour. That burst of frenzy was done. The storm had blown itself out. He was thinking quite quietly and rather dully. His glorious, great adventure had come to a sudden end. All at once he had rambled out of Arcadia into the common thorough-

fare of Life real, earnest Life unpleasantly real, mercilessly earnest. His shepherdess, of course, was belonging to Arcadia. She could not step over the frontier into the thoroughfare of Life. It was not allowed. He had passed out of her province . . . out of her care . . . into that of another, who—had—no—stars—in—her—eyes. Their idyll was finished. Something else, not at all Arcadian, *more like a satire*, was being spouted. The pipe had been replaced by the barrel-organ. He had come down to earth.

Anthony felt very cold suddenly.

Paradise was lost.

He began to wonder miserably what Valerie French would say. She would be sorry, of course : very sorry, because she was very kind. She would be surprised, too, because she had no knowledge of this clandestine engagement. She would be disappointed—for his sake. She would know what it meant. She—she would understand And then she would wave 'Good-bye' from the edge of Arcadia, and he would see her no more.

He would see her no more.

Anthony stopped and put a hand to his head.

Why was he assuming that he would see her no more ? What rot ! They had been—great friends. Now—just because he was engaged—was he to lose her friendship ? And that at the very moment when his need of it was so sore ? What awful rot ! And who said she couldn't leave Arcadia ? Just because. . . .

Then the spurt of revolt died down, and Anthony found himself looking the truth in the eyes.

He could see her no more because he loved her.

For an instant the heavens were opened, and he saw what might have been. Then the sovereign vision faded—faded into the picture of a handsome, careless face, with large, brown eyes and a mass of auburn hair. . . .

Someone laughed—horribly. And Patch ran to his master and tried, leaping frantically, to lick his face.

I think it was largely because he had been so apprehensive that Anthony had jumped to the conclusion that the worst was at hand. He had, of course, a good deal to go on. *André alone had waked his memory.* Why ? Because, presumably, she had meant more to him than anyone else. *He had met her alone and kissed her.* So much he actually

remembered. *She loved him.* That he had seen—and confirmed. *She had read in his disappearance a sign that he loved her no more.* This showed plainly that he had loved her once. . . .

To erect a clandestine engagement upon this foundation of fact was very simple. Anyone less scrupulous would have perceived that the foundations would have supported equally well an ordinary, not very creditable, love affair. But that did not occur to Anthony. It was his memory he had lost, not his outlook.

Had he been told there and then that he had remembered the wrong girl, he would still have been most uneasy. He was persuaded, of course, that he had given her cause. . . .

As he made his way home that sunshiny morning, had they but known the truth, the very stones must have pitied him. The prince had become pauper. The pauper was being shown the prince's heritage—treasures of love and laughter, broad, smiling roods of happiness, castles of delight . . . gone, all gone, lost, forfeited by some madman's folly—some sudden, fleeting fancy for a Bacchante's face. The prince had sold his birthright for the brush of a girl's lips. The prince had plighted his troth. To keep it meant desolation. To break it, defilement. 'What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'

Later that morning, as Sir Andrew was leaving for the Temple, Lyveden desired his permission to keep two appointments he had made.

"One's at twelve, and the other at half-past one. That means that I shall be out, sir, from eleven to three."

"Do as you please," was the answer. "Do as you please. By the way, d'you think they really want me to come to this dinner to-night? Or is it some fool's idea of being polite?"

"I'm sure they do," said Anthony gravely.

Sir Andrew blew through his nose.

"Once for all," he said shortly. "I'll bet they don't ask me again."

He clapped his hat on his head and left the house.

Anthony's first appointment was with Forsyth and Co., Solicitors, Lincoln's Inn Fields. He kept it punctually, to learn quite a lot about himself. Amongst other things, he learned that he was extremely wealthy, and possessing a mansion in Town

and an estate in the West Country. But since his *fiancée* had visited Forsyth at ten, he did not learn that he had been engaged to be married to Valerie French. Once he had asked for his Will: and Forsyth, with bulging eyes and the Will in a drawer, had sworn that he had not made one. The attorney writhed, but the man was resolute. He had given his word.

Lyveden's second appointment was luncheon with Valerie French.

As they had taken tea the day before, so they lunched—by themselves. Lady Touchstone, like Plague, was to appear at dinner.

Valerie was, I suppose, in the fifth or sixth heaven.

Anthony was very quiet: very tender, but awfully quiet.

Throughout the meal they discussed his visit to Forsyth and what he had learned. Of their meeting the day before, nothing was said. It had been agreed, of course, that that day shouldn't count. . . .

At last coffee was served, and they were left alone.

Instantly Anthony rose and crossed to her side.

"Valerie, I've something to tell you. Yesterday afternoon I asked you a question—a very vital question. I asked if, when I—went down, I was unattached."

He paused.

"Yes?" whispered Valerie, dry-mouthed.

Had Forsyth talked? Surely Forsyth hadn't shown him his Will? Surely he couldn't have been so faithless. Yet . . .

"And you said yes—I was free."

Valerie nodded. She dared not trust her voice.

"Well, I have reason to think that when I disappeared I—was—engaged."

'Reason to think' Then it *was* Forsyth. Something he had said—some slip—some paper—some draft. . . .

Valerie began to tremble.

"You see," he went on slowly, "I've—I've remembered something."

Valerie's heart gave one tremendous bound.

"Yes?" she breathed. "Yes?"

Anthony looked at her sharply. He had expected that she would be astounded: instead, she seemed nervous, almost *apprehensive* Why on earth—

A sudden, terrible explanation burst into his brain.

"Valerie! Yesterday—when I asked if I was engaged—why did you tell me a lie?"

For an instant the girl hesitated. Then

she rose to her feet and put her hands on his shoulders.

"Because," she said simply, "I wanted you to think you were free."

Love is notoriously blind.

Even when she saw the grief in his fine, grey eyes she mistook it for glory. . . .

So they stood for a moment.

Then very gently he took her two hands from his shoulders and let them fall to her sides.

"We won't count to-day," he quoted. "Of course I see now. D'you

know, I'm not quite certain, but I think you've broken my heart."

He turned and passed out of the room.

Valerie stood paralysed. . . .

She heard him take his hat, and a moment later the door of the flat was shut.

* * * * *

Lady Touchstone had a grand air. For all that, the moment she opened her mouth, you felt at ease. Not that the grandeur departed. She never stepped down. Instead, she made you step up and sit down by her side. She could have hobnobbed with a swineherd—in fact, she had. And the swineherd had



"Valerie! Yesterday—when I asked if I was engaged—why did you tell me a lie?"

enjoyed her fellowship rather more than that of any crony he had ever known. She made him laugh till he cried, but he never felt an impulse to slap her upon the back. They actually had a drink together before they parted. And ever after the incident the swineherd regarded the bank upon which he had found her with much the same veneration as is due to the Stone of Scone. Indeed, if he passed it alone he always pulled his forelock.

It was, indeed, the lady's remarkable personality which lifted her out of the ditch into which, this September evening, she had been bundled without any warning and with no ceremony at all.

She had spent the day in the country and had returned rather late—at a quarter past seven, to wit, just five hours after Anthony had taken his leave. And dinner, as we know, was at eight . . . at Claridge's. . . .

She hurried into her room and rang for her maid.

Then a note on her table attracted her eye.

DEAR AUNT HARRIET,

Will you deputise for me to-night? I am not myself, and by the time you have this I shall have left for Bell Hammer.

Your loving

VALERIE.

So much for the ditch itself. Now for the brambles within.

The object of the dinner was to celebrate Anthony Lyveden's return to the fold. Of the four guests, one was coming because he loved Valerie, two to congratulate Valerie, and the fourth because he was a friend of Anthony Lyveden. And Valerie had left for Hampshire, and—it was twenty past seven.

So much for the briars in the ditch. Now for the convenient culvert by which poor Lady Touchstone decided to crawl out of her plight.

Upon resorting frantically to the telephone, with the purpose of stopping the guests, she found that that useful contrivance was out of order. And Valerie had left for Hampshire, and—it was seven twenty-five. . . .

It now became obvious to Lady Touchstone that, unless the situation was to become a total wreck, the sooner she made her toilet, the better for her.

Mercifully, her maid had deft fingers. . .

Half an hour later her ladyship entered a

taxi, admirably clothed, and hoping very hard that she was in her right mind.

Verily Valerie's action was enough to unhinge anyone. Why she had seen fit to take it, Lady Touchstone did not attempt to consider. She had had enough of trying to comprehend the incomprehensible. Besides, she was desperately anxious to spare her wits. If this dinner-party was not to prove a far-reaching fiasco, she would have to rise to the occasion as no understudy had ever risen before. Valerie was no ordinary star. *Hamlet* was going to be rendered without the Prince of Denmark, and the play had got to be a roaring success. . . .

Lady Touchstone set her white teeth.

The reflection that Richard and André were to make two of the guests comforted her. Richard Winchester was a tower of strength, and André—André, at least, was another woman. Besides, she knew them well. They would understand. She was a little afraid of meeting Anthony Lyveden. Scylla and Charybdis were hanging about that encounter. She must not forget that he had lost his memory. She must not remember that he had once lost his mind. Above all things, she must forget that he had lost his heart. Of the fourth guest, Sir Andrew Plague, K.C., she was actually frightened. Besides, he was a comparative stranger. She trusted that Anthony Lyveden would keep him in order. . . .

She entered Claridge's hall at two minutes to eight.

As she was scanning the lounge, Sir Andrew rose from a chair and advanced upon her.

Lady Touchstone offered up a short prayer.

"Madam," said the knight shortly, "I am here under false pretences."

"Good," said Lady Touchstone agreeably. "So'm I."

Sir Andrew stared.

"I have come without Major Lyveden. While I was dressing for dinner and wondering where he might be, I received a telephone message, begging me to make his excuses and say that he could not come. I need hardly say that I am extremely angry. He has forced my hand and he has made fools of us both."

"And my niece," said Lady Touchstone, "has done precisely the same. I can only assume that the mantles of insanity with which you and I clothed each other yesterday afternoon have fallen upon their respective

shoulders." She turned to look round the lounge. "There ought to be two other fools, waiting to catch our eye. But they're probably on the way. Shall we sit down and exchange abuse of our betrayers until they appear? I know some splendid epithets."

"Madam," said Plague, with a grin, "I can confirm that statement."

Lady Touchstone laughed.

"The finger of Fate," she observed, sinking into a chair, "is undoubtedly double-jointed. As you have justly recalled, three days ago I sat upon the opposite side of this street and called you to order." Sir Andrew choked. "Let me take this occasion," added Lady Touchstone quickly, "of apologising for assuming a rôle to which I had no shadow of right, which I did not adorn."

Sir Andrew threw up a deprecating hand.

"You have chastised me with whips," he said gently, "and my chastisement was deserved. I beg that you will not now chastise me with scorpions. May I add that the object of my visit yesterday afternoon was to offer a profound apology for my misconduct? Then I had the misfortune to fall over one of your hassocks——"

"You must admit," said Lady Touchstone, "that I behaved like a prize idiot. Go on. Without prejudice."

Sir Andrew tried not to grin.

"I have had," he replied, "no opportunity of observing the manners and customs of the happily exceptional class of individuals to which you refer, but, if I may say so, Lady Touchstone, my observation of your intellect suggests that you had reason for what you did. I was foolishly excited and, no doubt, spoke as a fool. If I was misunderstood, I have no just cause of complaint."

"That's very handsome," said Lady Touchstone, "and I should like to keep it. But I must hand it back. You never spoke as a fool. Of my own idiocy I dug myself into the mire, and then picked it up and threw it at you. I think it was very nice of you not to throw it back. And, talking of fools, it looks very much as if these two we're awaiting are wiser than we. If not, then they're knaves as well. It's ten minutes past eight."

"Knaves, if you please," said the knight. "I can't call them wise if they knew they were dining with you."

"Us," said Lady Touchstone. "I quite agree. I think we're excellent company and by no means such fools as we thought."

Sir Andrew rose to his feet.

"Madam," he said, "since our hostess has failed, I have the honour to ask you to be my guest."

Lady Touchstone inclined her head.

"I warn you," she said, "I'm very hungry."

Then she rose and preceded Sir Andrew Plague into the restaurant. . . .

The late opponents made a striking pair.

Lady Touchstone was much more than handsome, and if her figure was not what it had been, it must be remembered that it had been the talk of London. An admirable complexion had literally saved her face, and the spirit of youth, which had always inhabited her eyes, was apparently a tenant for life. She behaved as became her years: her soft, grey hair declared that she was over the crest of life, yet all the time her most attractive countenance was delivering an astounding rebutter. As for her beautiful eyebrows, they gave demeanour and grey-ness the lie direct. Moreover, she knew how to dress, and used the knowledge.

Sir Andrew Plague, in repose, distinguished any company: in eruption he overwhelmed. The man's tremendous personality was royally and, so, suitably lodged. His height saved him from being outrageously fat. A man of six feet five who is proportionately broad can wear a big apron. Moreover, Sir Andrew Plague had no need of a bearing-rein. His head was always high and his shoulders square. Between his height and his carriage his stomach fell flat. As for his looks, the knight was much less than handsome. Shorn of its strength, his mighty face would have made the fortune of a thirteenth-century jester. But nobody ever laughed, because the strength was no beard. It was, indeed, part and parcel of the great countenance. The set of the jaw, the proud curve of the lips, the supremacy of the keen, blue eyes were all trumpeting a puissance of another age. Wherever he went, everyone heard the fanfare, and such as were in his path gave him the wall. And everyone who did not know who he was inquired immediately and in some excitement. What is still more to the point is that the inquiries were always respectfully couched. If Sir Andrew had gone to a ball as the Widow Twankey, I believe that the other revellers would have laughed more out of politeness than anything else. After all, Richard Crookback excited but little derision.

"You know," said Lady Touchstone, when she was comfortably installed, "I'm

really almost relieved not to be sitting next to Anthony Lyveden. Don't think I don't like him, because I do. I'm positively silly about him, and always was. But his present defect bewilders me. I know exactly how I'm going to feel when we come face to face. I've had the sensation before—two or three times. Have you ever been suddenly presented with the wrong end of an ear-trumpet?"

"Not," said Sir Andrew, "that I can remember. Charity is indiscriminate, I know, but not so indiscriminate as all that."

Lady Touchstone laughed delightedly.

"I see," she said, "that you respect the dictum of Solon. Yet he was on the Bench."

Sir Andrew heaved with merriment.

"I have," he said, "a fellow-feeling. If you remember, he was once thought to be mad."

Lady Touchstone choked. At length—

"As I was saying," she continued, "I shall feel at a loss—tongue-tied. I shall flounder. I shall fall back upon that vulgar tramp of a topic—that well-worn copper which is in every dummy's purse—the weather."

"No, you won't," said Sir Andrew. "He'll see to that. His charm of manner is quite remarkable. The servants, who ought to hate him because of his office, worship the ground he treads. Of course, I know what you mean. He's your familiar friend, and the foundation of that familiarity has been cut away. He was your gossip, and reminiscence is the breath by which gossips live. How did your niece get on?"

"She's said very little," said Lady Touchstone, guardedly. "But she seemed very happy about him. He was the dearest fellow, and I gather he's exactly the same."

Sir Andrew frowned.

"Sentimentality," he said shortly, "is certainly among his failings."

"I should," said Lady Touchstone hurriedly, "have said 'lovable.'"

"Madam," said Sir Andrew severely, "I cannot appreciate that adjective. Only the other night Major Lyveden confessed to a dread that he might be a husband. And when, while admitting the horror of such a contingency, I remarked that what had been suffered in the past could probably be endured again, he replied that what was concerning him was that he would not love the woman." Lady Touchstone became extremely interested. "I reproved him, of course," continued Sir Andrew Plague, "but you will agree that it is distressing to find

such a fly in such ointment. Otherwise, his outlook upon life is sane and discerning. And if he is somewhat stubborn, his charm of manner does much to redeem that fault."

"You say," said Lady Touchstone, "that he was dreading the idea that he might be a married man?"

"Naturally. The first thing he told me last night was that he was unattached. It was plainly a great relief."

Lady Touchstone sipped her champagne. Then—

"Have you the slightest idea," she inquired, "why he has failed to-night? I know he gave you no reason, but do you suspect any cause? Did he let fall any hint?"

Sir Andrew reflected.

At length—

"I have no idea," he said. "But I can tell you this. Last night he was in the very best of spirits. This morning he was late for breakfast—he had been abroad, I believe—and he seemed unusually quiet. He desired my permission to keep two appointments he had made. I gave it, of course. But his subdued manner was noticeable."

"One of those appointments," said Lady Touchstone, "was with my niece. If he is not here to-night, because he is depressed, it looks as if she may be suffering from the same malady."

"Which he communicated to her?"

"Exactly. You say he went out before breakfast?"

"So I believe. But what——"

"*Cherchez la femme*," flashed Lady Touchstone. Sir Andrew started. "I'm sure of it. While he was out, he met someone."

"But what has this," said Sir Andrew, "to do with your niece? Assume that he met some woman. I think it highly improbable, but let that pass. Assume that the encounter depressed him. Why should this depression affect your niece?"

Lady Touchstone looked her host full in the face.

"I am about," she said, "to commit a breach of trust. I have sworn to Valerie not to disclose a certain fact, and I am going to break my word. I am going to make a confidential communication. I believe that it will go no further."

Sir Andrew smiled.

"Secrets," he said, "never do. Their next step is always the last."

"Don't wither me," said his guest. "That would be inhospitable."

Sir Andrew inclined his head

"Where forty winters," he said, "have so signally failed, I cannot hope to succeed."

"Fifty-three," said Lady Touchstone, blushing. "You know that as well as I do."

The knight lifted his glass.

"I never flatter," he said. "It is a contemptible practice. You and I, madam, were born in the same year. I have often counted it an ill-starred period: henceforth I shall remember it as a year of grace."

"As a matter of fact," said my lady, "it's the champagne. I don't often revel, and I've never attained that dizzy height of communion which is too exuberant for words and can only be expressed by the exchange of headgear. But the idea has always appealed to me. No, the secret is this. When your secretary disappeared, he was about to be married."

"He was engaged?"



"The knight lifted his glass. 'I never flatter,' he said."

Lady Touchstone nodded.

"And deeply attached—to my niece."

"No!"

"Yes, indeed. And she, most properly, won't hear of him being told."

"Why not?" cried the K.C. "The contract stands. And, as a man of honour, Lyveden has only to learn

his liability—"

"Which," said Lady Touchstone, "is precisely why Valerie won't have him told. If he was told, he'd want to carry out his contract. And she would never know whether he was following his heart's desire or keeping his honour bright."

"Does she want to marry him?"

"Only if he wants to marry her."

"He wanted to once," said Plague.

"Very much."

"Then it may be fairly presumed—"

"If you were in her position," said Lady

Lady Touchstone drank with a bewitching smile.

Then—

"I demand," she said, "to be shown the woman whom you have paid two compliments in the same minute. We are getting on well, aren't we?" she added naively. "At this rate, by the end of the evening we shall have changed hats."

Sir Andrew began to shake with laughter.

"Is that your secret?" he gurgled. "I can hardly believe that your niece was so optimistic."

Touchstone, "you'd want to *know*. You wouldn't want to take any chances, however slight."

"Madam," said Plague deliberately, "you are talking nonsense. Marriage is notoriously the most reckless gamble in life. You stake your birthright,



and once in a million throws you get your money back. What does it matter what subordinate chances

you take? A gambler stakes a fortune, and backs himself to win for half-a-crown."

His guest put a hand to her head.

"I'm not going to argue," she said, "because, if I do, I shall lose. I can see that. There must be some obvious flaw in your contention, and I shall probably perceive it just as I'm going to get into bed. Valerie's perfectly right, and so am I. Remember, I'm greatly handicapped by your inability to appreciate a common enough emotion, and I consider that I have shown the greatest restraint by not referring to it before. However, we've wandered terribly. The point is that whereas last night their relations were happy, this afternoon my niece and Anthony Lyveden are no longer at one. If they were, they'd be here. More. If only one was unhappy, the other would have turned up. Therefore they are both in distress. *Cherchez la femme*."

"Is that a command?" said the knight. "Or only a quotation?"

"I should like it to be a command."

Sir Andrew fingered his chin.

"There were," he said tentatively, "two other guests . . ."

My lady, who was about to drink, hesitated and then set down her glass.

"There were," she said.

"Why have they failed?"

For a moment Lady Touchstone sat motionless, staring at the keen, blue eyes three feet away. Then she smiled very sweetly.

"You're very obedient," she said, "and very, very clever."

Sir Andrew frowned.

"I have yet to learn," he said, "that the man who slew Ahab was accounted a marksman."

* * *

When, an hour and a half later, Sir Andrew Plague re-entered his hall to see a telegram lying upon the table, he took and

opened the envelope as of right.

Joshua will be by the Albert Memorial to-morrow at seven o'clock.

Sir Andrew stared at the writing.

"Joshua? Who the devil was—"

Then he saw that the communication had not been addressed to him. Also, because he was no fool and had come fresh from the council, he perceived that the flimsy sheet which he held in his hand was the ace of trumps itself.

It was characteristic of the man that he did not hesitate.

He put the ace of trumps into his pocket, entered the library, and rang the bell.

When a servant appeared—

"Is Major Lyveden abed?"

"No, sir. He's not come in."

"When he comes in, say nothing about that telegram."

"Very good, sir."

"And, however contrary his orders, call him at eight o'clock."

"Very good, sir."

"Call me at six."

"Very good, sir."

Sir Andrew's intuition was sound.

Before the knight was in bed, his secretary returned, footsore and dejectedly inquisitive. Happily, the servant he summoned knew how to obey. . . .

"No message at all?"

"No, sir."

"Ah! Well, call me at half-past six, please."

"Very good, sir."

"And be sure you wake me. I'm tired."

"Er—yes, sir."

"Good night."

The servant retired, and Lyveden sank into a chair and stared before him.

"Feet of clay," he muttered, "feet of clay. Those little, shining insteps—vile clay. And yet . . . My God," he burst out suddenly, "what's the good of pretending? I'd rather kiss those insteps than André's mouth. Clay or platinum—what does it matter? They're *hers* . . . *her* feet . . . *her* little, precious feet . . ." He looked upon his terrier and laughed. "And that's the naked truth, my fellow. Anybody want to buy a soul?"

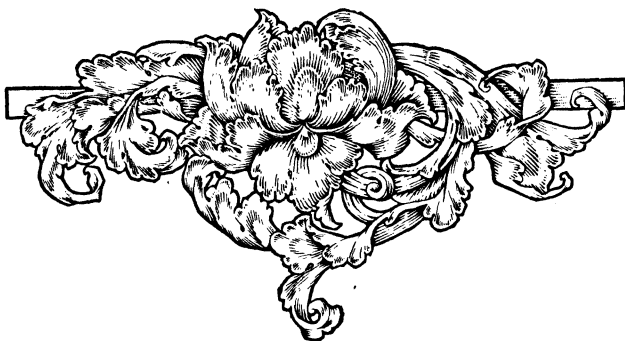
Patch, who hoped he was being asked whether he was hungry, sat up and begged.

* * * * *

There, the long day is over, and all but one of my puppets are gone to their rest. The strutting André, the fretting Lyveden, conspirators Plague and Touchstone, honest,

unwitting Winchester—all are up on their shelf until to-morrow. For the last of all, sirs, we will not wait, because she will lie awake the whole night long, hearing the owls cry and the merciless stable clock telling the sluggish hours. She might be dead—this puppet with the thick, dark hair—so very still she lies, so cold are those glorious temples, that delicate throat, those beautiful, slender arms. But for her eyes, she might be some fairy queen, sleeping in dull, cold marble to mark her majesty's tomb . . . but for her dark-blue eyes. These are restless. Their field is limited, because she lies so still, and so is their vision, because the night is dark, but so much as they can compass they know by heart—the dim silhouette of the table against the black of the wall, the faint, familiar outline of the great pier-glass, the panelled foot of the bed and, beyond, the square, black mouth of the open window, breathing the cool, night air and, now and again, a sigh of the wandering wind. See, she is moving at last. She is sitting up, while her thick, dark hair falls like a cloak about her breast and shoulders. She is drawing up her knees, setting her chin upon them, clasping her hands about her insteps. She can peer into the park now, and very soon her eyes will pick up the line of the woods against the sky. Yet, but for those restless eyes, she is still the fairy queen and still sculpture. And, as I have said, we will not wait for this puppet, that neither struts nor frets nor sleeps, because the stable clock is merciless and the hours sluggish.

A further instalment of this story will appear in the next number.





CONTENT

THE hill behind my little house
Is trimmed with hawthorn trees;
The criss and cross of their long rows
Make clear green boundaries;
The lines of bloom along their boughs
Are full of wandering bees.

And here's a filly, there's a hack,
And yon a tethered hound;
The sower with his grain in sack
Strides on the topmost ground,
Like signs in a green zodiac,
Each body hawthorn-bound.

Filly and hack their hedge would rend,
The hound his cord would snap;
Where clouds on the horizon blend,
The sower thinks, good chap,
He'd find a better field to tend,
Kind earth and quicker sap.

Yet leave to me my fenced plot,
And I'll not grieve at all;
The vision of a world forgot,
Without memorial,
Would be the land where bounds are not
And no horizons call.

WILFRID THORLEY.

MANY WATERS

By ETHEL M. RADBOURNE

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

THE storm had lashed the sea into fury, so that now, though the wind was still, the waters moved tempestuously, advancing against the coast with an air of menace. High up on the cliff-side Ruston stood and watched this mood of the sea. He turned his back resolutely on the inn garden, with its sloping lawn and the summer-house where Dorothea was sitting with Sydney Greaves. He was estranged from all that spoke of serenity; only the vindictive sea expressed his mood.

Dorothea and Sydney Greaves! The sea's voice need not be as silent as his own. It could fill the air with irony, with rebuke, with the sharp cry of jealousy. *Dorothea!* Ruston found himself repeating the name rapidly under his breath. There was a hint of awe in his voice as if he spoke of sunshine, flower scents, or the mystery of dawn. She was the epitome of all things beautiful.

Ruston opened a gate that led from the inn garden to the cliff-path. He followed it for a few minutes till a bend hid the garden from sight. If he moved his head now, there was no fear of seeing Dorothea bending over her sewing, whilst Greaves sat serenely at her side. Here, too, he was getting closer to the sea. As the path dipped, he could feel whips of spray against his cheek. The sea was his comrade. It understood all that seethed in his mind at thought of his rival. The man could beat him on every count—personal appearance, mental equipment, prospects. The knowledge was a goad pricking Ruston to misery. He could not even claim the scant comfort of escape. Mrs. Court, Dorothea's aunt, had sent for Ruston on business which, as her estate agent, he was bound to transact. He discussed delinquent tenants with Mrs. Court, whilst Greaves played tennis, walked, and rode with Dorothea. And always at the core of his unhappiness dwelt his memory of a time when he had hoped that Dorothea might learn to care for him. A look, a chance phrase, the inflexion of her voice—he held these inviolate in the archives of his memory.

But they were of yesterday. To-day held Greaves and his persistent siege of Dorothea's heart.

The path mounted again, breasting the height of the cliff. Ruston had gained the top and walked for some little time before he came to a sudden pause. The familiarity of the path had gone. He looked to right and left with amazement.

An old countryman stood on the path-side, gazing seawards. Ruston approached him.

"Am I dreaming, or has the path changed its appearance since I was last here?"

"A bit of a landslide. It often happens round this coast. Cliffs never the same from one mile to another—a bit here, a bit there."

"It makes this part of the path dangerous," Ruston suggested—"a narrow ledge only."

"Not dangerous if folks use their eyes," the old man said.

"Picture a dark night, and this few yards of the path. A man would move with the certainty born of knowledge, then suddenly——" Ruston's gesture indicated disaster. He looked down at the jagged rocks and at the menacing sea, a monster lying in wait at the cliff-foot.

"No danger if folks use their eyes," the man reiterated.

Ruston turned back towards the inn, moving quickly. His watch told him that he had barely time to get back and change for dinner. His lips twisted as he thought of the coming meal. Mrs. Court and himself, Dorothea and Greaves. From the dining-room window they could watch the sea. Its voice would accompany theirs; it would fill their silences with its age-long message.

A clock struck the hour as Ruston reached the inn. At the foot of the stairway he paused, watching Dorothea descend. She was in black, with a scarlet rose thrust into the dark coils of her hair. Ruston watched her as a man watches sunrise.

"You're late." She glanced at his heated

face. "And you should have been later. You look as if you and Time had run a race."

"We have. I went for a walk along the cliffs and got further than I intended. The sea is an allurements I can't resist."

"I can resist it to-day. It looks cruel, sounds cruel. I found it depressing."

"You?" His stress of the pronoun brought her eyes to his questioningly. "I thought you too happy to notice the sea's anger. You and depression!" His gesture indicated irreconcilable things.

She looked at him for a moment intently. Sisterly, compassionate—Ruston felt the words rise in his throat and choke him. She could be as solicitous for him as for a brother. He heard her voice as from some remote place.

"Don't wait to change. The others are ready and waiting." She was moving towards the dining-room as she spoke. Ruston looked after her till the door closed behind her.

At dinner Mrs. Court, Dorothea's aunt, held Ruston captive to her tongue. Her small-talk was like a hailstorm about his ears. In brief intervals he heard Greaves's voice talking to Dorothea. The very timbre of the fellow's voice expressed devotion. Ruston caught scraps of his sentences—plans for motor rides and picnics, a hundred devices for serving Dorothea. Her answers were monosyllabic. Between the flower vases Ruston caught occasional glimpses of her face, eyes lowered, heightened colour. Greaves's sentences could set her eyelids fluttering. Already the fellow had the grand mien of a conqueror. Jealousy—Ruston fought it as he would have fought for breath if he were drowning. And all the time Mrs. Court's interminable chatter held him outwardly serene.

Dessert brought him a respite. The flower vases had been shifted to make room for fruit dishes. The rearrangement set the four diners face to face with no barrier between. Dorothea bent across to Ruston.

"Look at your friend the sea; it grows angrier."

The setting sun ran like a path of flame along the waters, and in the rising strength of the wind the waters were troubled so that the waves came like advancing hosts against the rocks. In little lulls of talk the voice of the sea besieged their ears as if a giant spoke.

"It still allures you?" Dorothea asked.

"Yes. It—I think of it as a friend."

"You speak as if you were friendless without it."

Her voice held sympathy, held understanding. Its sudden softening made Ruston catch his breath. She *knew*. Even whilst her heart sang for joy she could spare a passing pity for Ruston. She saw him wounded, and longed to tend his wounds. Ruston told himself that he could read her mind like an open book. Under cover of Mrs. Court's chatter to Greaves he answered quickly—

"I suppose there comes a time in most men's lives when they turn to Mother Nature for comradeship. She has a way of grinding one's ego into very little pieces, and some day I suppose that brings peace—or the dull shadow of it."

Mrs. Court turned from Greaves to Ruston. "What's that about dull shadows? Is there another storm coming? Thunder?" She glanced at the lowering sky and launched into a description of a storm at sea seen in her girlhood. The relation had not ended when they left the dining-room. The last phrase of it followed Ruston down the steps into the inn garden, where he sought solitude.

He lighted a cigar and paced to and fro along the lane that ran at the foot of the garden. Puffs of wind came about him insistently, as if Mother Nature demanded his attention for the pageantry of Night and the moonlit sea.

Someone came down the steps into the garden. Greaves—his voice betrayed him. He was humming "The Devout Lover" as he moved towards the garden gate.

"It is not mine to sing the stately grace,
The great soul beaming in my lady's face. . . ."

Ruston saw his head and shoulders illumined by the match he struck and held in the cup of his hands. Then presently his voice again.

"And worship her in distant reverence. . . ."

The gate clicked and Greaves stepped out into the lane. The glowing end of Ruston's cigar betrayed his presence.

"Is that you, Ruston? Care for a walk? I'm off to Barton to see if I can hire a car for to-morrow. The telephone here's out of order, and I want to fix the thing up to-night. It's only a three-mile tramp."

"Going by road?" Ruston asked.

"I thought I'd take the cliff-path; it's shorter."

"Considerably." Ruston nodded over his cigar. "No, I don't think I'll come. I've some letters to write when I turn in."

"Right you are." Greaves swung on his heel, an erect figure in the moonlight. The sound of his voice floated back—

"It is not mine to sing the stately grace,
The great soul. . . ."

The sound grew fainter, muted by distance.

Ruston opened the gate and stepped back into the garden. He lifted his eyes to the sky, where the moon rode stately and aloof. Clouds were massing there, her satellites. They veiled her presently, jealous of watching eyes. The wind was dying, and the voice of the sea reigned supreme.

A flight of stone steps led from the garden into the writing-room. Ruston pushed the door open, expecting to find the room empty. He gave a quick exclamation at sight of Dorothea.

"I left my writing-case here before dinner." She lifted it from the table where it lay and turned towards the door. "Have you been to have another look at the sea?"

"Yes. As I told you, it has become my friend."

She moved her hands appealingly. "Why do you cultivate a mood of solitude? It isn't like you."

"Not as I used to be." He admitted it with inward bitterness. "The tragedy of life is that we have to alter our focus. Fate forces us, whether or no."

She turned towards him. All he had thought of as sisterly compassion dwelt in her eyes. "Jack, nowadays I can only speak to you across a barrier. You have erected it. I stand on tiptoe to catch a glimpse of you on the other side. Why? We have been such friends, you and I."

"And always will be." He tasted the bitterness of her word "friendship"—a shadow for the substance he desired. He forced himself to add: "Nothing must break that friendship. It goes back to our school-days. It must go on to the end."

She was looking down at her hands, moving them about the clasp of her writing-case. For a moment her eyes were hidden. When she raised them their expression was veiled. There was a subtle change in her. Ruston felt it, but could not define it.

For a few minutes after she had left the room he stood in the centre of the floor, listening to the sound of her footsteps. When he ceased to hear them, he went rapidly to the door that led to the garden, opened it, and stepped out into the night. He could not stay where walls encompassed him. Alone in that room he felt stifled.

Greaves! The voice of the sea came to Ruston's ears in persistent repetition of the name. The air was full of it—that, and Greaves's sentences: "Only a three-mile tramp. I thought I'd take the cliff-path; it's shorter." And Ruston had been silent. The torment of his heart had hung a weight upon his lips.

The night seemed full of voices, interpreting him. He was deafened by their persistent chorus. "But for Greaves's advent, you might have won Dorothea," the voices called. "He came on the scene at the moment when her heart swayed towards you. He caught her in the Valley of Indecision, which would have led to the Hill of Decision had he not come. The man has robbed you of the only woman you ever loved. Even now, were he out of the way . . ."

The voices paused, merged into the thunder of the waves. But even the waves spoke of Dorothea. "She understands. To-night, did you see the tenderness of her eyes? Her pity for your wound? Did you notice the subtle change in her when you spoke of a lifelong friendship?"

Ruston came to a pause, staring down at the sea. He spoke aloud to the night. "Even yet, were Greaves out of the way, I believe I could win her."

He stood there, gazing down at the welter of waters dimly shown by the lamp of the moon. And suddenly the lamp was quenched, leaving him in utter darkness. Storm-clouds struck light from the sky.

"As the light of my soul would be quenched if I made no effort to save Greaves!" The thought pierced like the thrust of a poinard.

He turned abruptly. In a moment he was running along the cliff-path. Remorse was a goad pricking him to speed. He had been silent, and that silence would thrust him into a depth of ignominy. Greaves's voice: "I'll take the cliff-path; it's shorter." Then his own silence which had been acquiescence.

Ruston strove towards the narrow ledge where the path had crumbled, his breath coming in gasps. He lifted his voice and called: "The path isn't safe, Greaves!"

His words would not travel—night seemed to beat them back against his lips—and darkness impeded his movements, so that he stumbled and halted when he desired the winged feet of Mercury. He judged himself to be within a few hundred yards of the place now. He lifted his voice to call again:



"Listen! I knew the cliff-path was unsafe in the darkness, and I let Greaves go unwarned. . . . Then Greaves risked his life to save mine. Now you know us both. Gold—and alloy!"

"Greaves, the path there isn't safe in the dark! *Greaves . . .*"

The name became a great cry on his lips, torn from him as his feet stumbled and slid, hurtling him over the edge of the cliff. Time seemed to stand still, making a lifetime of a moment. Then stillness and utter forgetfulness.

Ruston was conscious first of the sea's voice. It came to him from a remote distance, but with a hint of familiarity. He lay pondering the origin of that rhythmic sound of advance and retreat. Presently he moved his hand and touched a jagged end of stone. Realisation came slowly. His first coherent thought was: "I must not move. A narrow ledge of rock holds me back from destruction." A stab of pain in his right arm brought him to the further realisation that he was hurt. Pain was like a lamp in a dark place, showing him the path he had travelled. He saw himself running along the cliff-top, with Greaves's name on his lips. Then a slip, and an interminable moment of suspense; now this ledge of rock midway between earth and heaven.

Ruston's thoughts now were as vivid as the movement of brush on canvas. A fall down the cliff-side would have spelt disaster save for some rare miracle of chance. He had been saved by that jutting ledge of rock. A few yards to right or left of it, and he would have faced certain death. Then what of Greaves? The hundredth chance was not likely to come to two men in the same night.

He tried to judge his distance from the sea, but he was shrouded in thick darkness. He dreaded the first streaks of dawn. Light when it came might show him Greaves, stretched stark at the cliff-foot; and Ruston's silence would have pushed him there. The sea's voice was nothing but an echo of Greaves's laughing sentences: "I thought I'd take the cliff-path; it's shorter." Ruston's answering silence was like the dark pall of night in which he lay.

Dawn when it came showed Ruston that his fall had carried him about half-way down the cliff-side. Painfully he struggled to a kneeling position, clinging with his uninjured arm to the rock. He kept his eyes on the upward reach of cliff. Below him that silent figure might lie stretched, with the froth of the advancing waves against its feet. He tried to call for help, but his voice tricked him, was nothing save a whisper. He clung desperately to the ledge of rock, fighting the dizziness that would send him hurtling to the cliff-foot.

His eyes on the top of the cliff, Ruston drew a sudden breath of fear at sight of Greaves's face, pallid in the dawn. It showed through the mist like the face of a ghost. His eyes stared down into Ruston's. There seemed nothing in space save those compelling eyes.

Ruston sent a great cry into the dawn: "Greaves!"

There was an answer. It seemed to come from some far-off corner of the universe. Ruston, sick and dizzy, crouched on his ledge of rock. Below him the sea sang its homage to the quick-rising sun. Then silence.

When Ruston opened his eyes again, he lay on the cliff-top, with Greaves kneeling beside him, holding a brandy-flask to his lips. He would have struggled to a sitting posture, but Greaves held him firmly. "Not till you've taken this."

He obeyed, his eyes on Greaves's face. Suddenly he pushed Greaves's hand aside and struggled upwards. "There's blood on your face—on your hands."

"Is there?" Greaves shrugged his shoulders. "Sorry. I got a bit scratched coming down the cliff-side."

Ruston's voice was nothing but a hoarse whisper: "You came down the cliff-side?"

"Couldn't have reached you any other way," Greaves laughed. "But don't talk. I want to get you back to the inn. You must have that arm seen to. It's badly smashed, I'm afraid." He put his arm round Ruston's shoulders and helped him to his feet.

"You came down the cliff-side?" Ruston's voice stumbled. It fell away into a whisper: "You ran that risk to reach me?"

"Oh, stop talking, Ruston! I had good practice for that kind of exercise in the Alps. Lean on me—so. Gently! Slow and steady does the trick."

They moved stiffly. Greaves's arm was about Ruston to keep him from stumbling.

"What brought you here in the dawn?" Ruston asked. His lips moved as stiffly as his feet, so that Greaves had difficulty in interpreting him.

"After I left you last night I altered my mind about the cliff-path," Greaves told him. "It was a dark night, and I decided that the road was a safer proposition. I was glad I did, too. An old chap I met in the town told me there'd been a bit of a landslide on the cliff-path, enough to make it risky in the dark. I came back again by road. Just as I reached the bottom of the

path that leads to the inn, I'd an odd fancy I heard someone calling my name. The sound was far off and seemed to come from the cliffs. After a minute I decided I was dreaming, and went on to the inn."

Ruston stumbled over a rough piece of path, and Greaves steadied him.

"It was odd how the idea stuck that someone had called me. I couldn't shake the fancy off even after I got to bed. It persisted in my dreams. All at once I found myself sitting up in bed, speaking aloud in the darkness: 'It was *Ruston's* voice!' Odd how some things persist in one's mind when common-sense says 'Ridiculous!' Anyhow, I got out of bed, slipped along to your door, and tapped on it. When there was no answer, I tried the handle of the door, opened it, and saw that your bed was empty."

"Yes?" Ruston's voice paused on the monosyllable.

"It struck me that you might have got into difficulties somewhere about the cliffs, so I dressed and came along."

Again Ruston stumbled, and again Greaves's arm steadied and supported. The two men moved side by side, with the pageantry of sunrise for background. Ruston's eyes went from the sky to the blood on Greaves's face and hands, but he was silent. The only sound was the crunching of their feet on the gravel.

The inn came into sight at the next turning. Ruston could see the curtains in Dorothea's room billowing to and fro in the morning breeze. *Dorothea!* He glanced sideways at Greaves. He, too, was looking at her window. Both men approached it as they would have approached a shrine. The sea's voice was a rhapsody because Dorothea existed.

Greaves had left the door of the writing-room unlatched, and now he led Ruston up the steps and into the room. He put Ruston into a chair, then turned to the door again.

"I'm off for the doctor. Time that arm was seen to."

"I had forgotten it," Ruston said.

"All the same, I'm going to rout Dr. Hayes from his bed."

Left alone, Ruston stared about the room. Over there, against the writing-desk, Dorothea had stood last night. He could hear her voice: "Jack, nowadays I can only speak to you across a barrier."

Ruston's uninjured arm jerked to his eyes, hiding them. There was an indestructible

barrier between them now. Last night he had reared it, brick on brick, when he stood silent without warning Greaves. Now he seemed to see Dorothea's eyes going from one to the other of the two men who loved her. Gold—and alloy. There could be no other verdict.

Someone fumbled with the door-latch. Ruston, amazed, saw it open and Dorothea come into the room.

"Jack!"

He struggled to his feet and stood swaying against his chair.

"I was awake early, and got up to watch sunrise from my window. I saw you both come up from the cliff-path. What has happened? Why, Jack, you're *hurt!*"

She was at his side in a moment. Before the sudden revelation of her eyes he stood aghast. He was lifted momentarily out of a place of shadow into dazzling, revealing light.

"Dorothea"—he put out his uninjured arm as if to push her from him—"don't look at me like that! I—I'm not worth your frowns, still less your friendship."

Her fingers were busy with his arm. At sight of his injuries she gave a strangled cry. "Tell me what has happened."

"But for Greaves I shouldn't be here at all." Ruston's voice came deliberately. He could not look at Dorothea. The adorable solicitude of her eyes unmanned him. "I stumbled over the cliff-side in the dark. A jutting ledge of rock held me back from instant disaster. Then Greaves risked his life to save mine."

Her eyes were distended with horror. "The merest chance only that you are here, near to me again! *Jack!*"

Once more their eyes met in that dazzling light of revelation. The knowledge pierced Ruston's consciousness like a sword-thrust. "She loves me—not Greaves!"

As if she read his thought, she stooped towards him. Her fingers moved tenderly about his wounded arm. Her head bent over her work. She said: "You built a barrier. What could I do but stay on the other side?"

"You were willing to come in? Dorothea, you mean *that?*"

And then abruptly he moved from her, stumbling towards the window. The sea's voice seemed suddenly to fill the room. The tumult of the waters matched the tumult in his soul. There was an instant's pause, and in that pause Ruston saw himself again facing an alternative of speech—or silence.

Across the width of the floor he looked intently at Dorothea. His words would strike the tenderness from her eyes. Before he spoke he made a little gesture as if to say good-bye to her.

"There's something I must tell you. God forgive me, for a moment I was tempted to keep silence. Last night I kept a dastardly silence. I let my jealousy of Greaves strip me of manhood."

"Jealousy of Greaves?" She would have laughed but for the tragedy of his eyes. "Surely you knew I thought of him as a delightful friend only. You were so busy barrier-building that you had no eyes for the truth."

"I was blind." He admitted it with a twisted smile. "I was like a man on the rack, tortured by jealousy. Honour——" His gesture showed it slipping from him like a cast-off cloak. "Listen! I knew the cliff-path was unsafe in the darkness, and I let Greaves go unwarned. I—I thought there might be a chance for me if he was out of the way."

He could not look at her. Shame was a veritable weight upon his head, keeping it bowed. "Then Greaves risked his life to save mine." He jerked his head up at that, meeting her eyes. "Now you know us both. Gold—and alloy!"

He saw her as one stricken. Colour had slipped from her face, leaving it grey. Her lips were moving.

"Many waters. . . ." Her voice was low, yet he heard it. She seemed to hunt for some

phrase that as yet would only yield her these two words. "Many waters. . . ." The repetition filled his ears.

Outside the sea was an echo. It filled the air with its cannonade of rushing waters. The sound seemed to besiege the room in which they stood. Many waters, irresistible, invincible.

"Many waters cannot quench love." She looked at him now through a mist of tears. "Neither can the floods drown it."

Ruston was shaking from head to foot. He put out his left arm to steady himself against the wall. "Do you mean that even my shame can't quench it? Dorothea!"

She came to him then with a little cry. She was compassion incarnate. She saw him at the same time ignoble, yet touched by contrition into nobility. She saw him as alloy transmuted into gold by the alchemy of her forgiveness.

"Greaves doesn't know the truth. I must tell him." Ruston threw his head back as a man who would climb from the depths to the level of his best self.

Amazement filled him at thought of Greaves. The man towered like a giant in his thoughts; he gave him homage as one gives it to heroes. Yet Dorothea had stooped, had chosen the pigmy instead of the giant. Even now he felt her fingers moving tenderly about his wounded arm.

Outside the sea's voice was an echo of the truth that love is invincible, not to be quenched by many waters.

GREEN ON THE HEDGES.

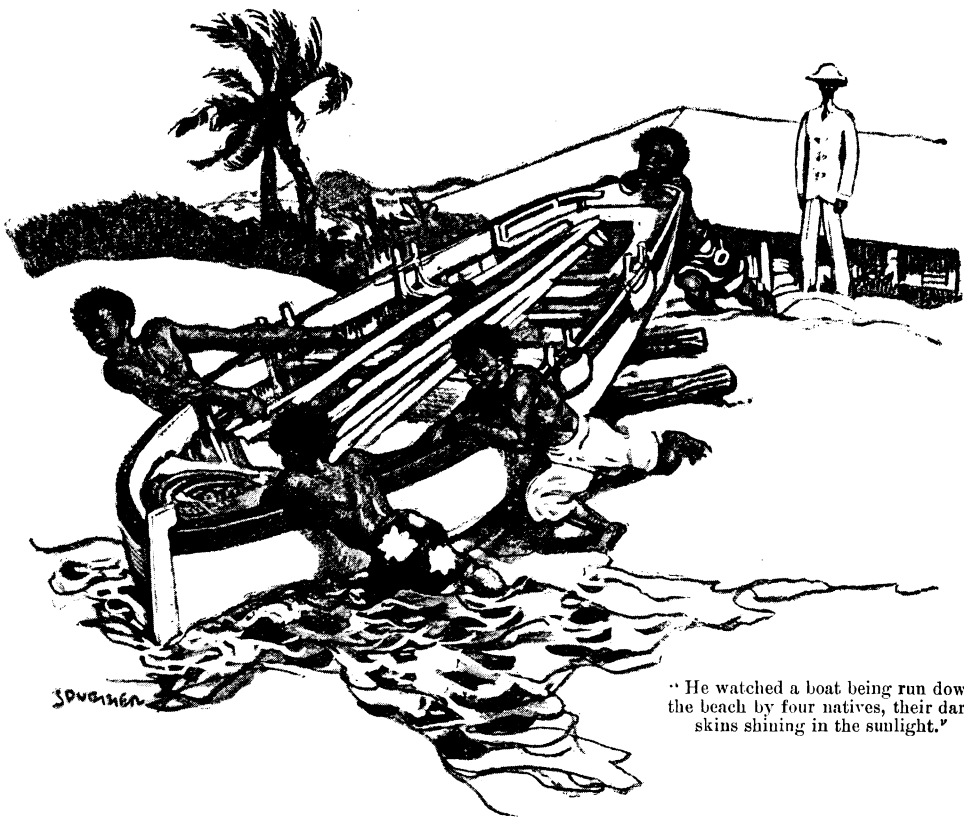
OH, there's green on the hedges, and when the wind sings,

The heart from my breast is abroad on fleet wings;
Who whispered of sorrow, now let him be dumb—
There's green on the hedges, and gladness has come.

Oh, there's green on the hedges, and when the wind moves,
My heart that was lonely remembers its loves;
Who mourned the long winter, now let him refrain—
There's green on the hedges, love blossoms again.

Oh, there's green on the hedges, and when the wind blows,
The heart in my breast on its pilgrimage goes;
For laughter and loving the omen is true—
There's green on the hedges for me and for you.

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.



"He watched a boat being run down the beach by four natives, their dark skins shining in the sunlight."

RENUNCIATION

By J. RUSSELL WARREN

ILLUSTRATED BY STEVEN SPURRIER

VANSITTART arrived at the island in a state of indecision equal to that in which he had set out upon his quest. It was a frame of mind unusual to him, and inwardly he resented it.

He stood leaning over the rail of the little cargo boat in which he had taken passage. Before him lay the lagoon, purple and blue around the vessel, shading to brilliant green in the shadows by the beach, dazzling white in the pitiless sunlight. Everywhere the water was pellucid, translucent. He could see the bottom, a gaudy garden of coral and shells and many-coloured seaweed, inhabited by swift flashes of vivid colour that were tropical fish.

Beyond the beach the dark green fringe of the woods, broken here and there by a

rough outcrop of basalt cliff, rose like a wall. In it a sort of recess had been cleared. In the clearing was set a wooden house, long, low, its roof glaring white in the sunshine; its shadowed verandah, its door and window openings purple-blue; the clusters of bougainvillea that climbed about the verandah posts glowing like rubies. Around the house lay a little garden, hedged with tamarisk, ingeniously irrigated by the canalising of a little stream that ran down from the woods, and glowing with tropical flowers.

"It's not bad," said Vansittart, with that judicial impartiality he so carefully cultivated. "For a man who can come down to this sort of thing, it's not at all bad."

He watched a boat being run down the

beach by four natives, their dark skins shining in the sunlight as if wet. A tall figure in white showed dimly in the shadow of the verandah, became with startling suddenness clearly visible on the sunlit steps, a white silhouette against the dark background, then, descending the steps to the beach, became blurred again, a moving patch of white against the scorched coral sand. The figure stepped into the boat, the oarsmen gave way. Swiftly the little craft sped across the placid waters of the lagoon towards the ship.

Vansittart watched, his lean, brown, dried-up face wrinkled in uncertainty.

His mental attitude towards the situation was painfully undecided. He was aware of the facts of the case. But he was wont to say that facts are nothing. They are merely concrete expression, sometimes accurate, sometimes illusory, of the human motives that bring them into existence. It was this underlying motive, this mental and moral condition from which the facts had sprung, that he had to discover.

The news that sent him on his quest had come to him by way of a letter from home and a paragraph in an Indian newspaper. The letter was his own, and nobody out here but himself need know its contents. But the information in the printed paragraph was the property of anyone who cared to read it, theirs to disclose, to discuss, to disseminate, as they chose. This forced immediate action upon him. Sooner or later someone would take the news to Roderick Cavanagh. It was impossible to think that the man could for ever remain in ignorance.

He was not even sure that he wanted that. He was disposed to be just to Roderick. And Gerald would insist that the man must be found. But, in any case, it was all-important in what shape, with what suggested line of action, the news was put before Cavanagh. The mental attitude the man could be induced to adopt was everything. It was imperative, therefore, that Vansittart should be the first to take the news to the island.

Insistently, all through the voyage, rose in Vansittart's mind the fact that there was no disputing, no evading. The man was living the life of little better than a beach-comber. He had turned his back upon civilisation, upon the only kind of existence that, to the lawyer's mind, was respectable. He had, to outward seeming, sunk to a level that rough, tough, far-from-finishy

island skippers and traders scorned in disgust and derision. He had retreated to this island, peopled only by natives, married a native girl, cut himself off from the companionship of men of his own race and mentality.

On the face of it, a man who had done this was surely not one to inherit a title and estates, with all their attached responsibility, all their involved demand upon their holder to set an example to the world. Legally it was Roderick's right. But Vansittart had too close a familiarity with the law to worship it blindly. Morally, the other man, in England, with his English wife and his two blue-eyed, golden-haired sons, with his life lived in accordance with the conventions of the Western world, seemed in every way more fit.

Carefully the lawyer assured himself that nowhere in his attitude towards the affair was there a trace of sentiment. If he had a greater personal liking for one man than for the other, he would not let that fact influence him. The question of the Cavanagh succession was one of the deep, abiding interests of his life. It amounted almost to an obsession. Connected as he was with the family by blood and by years of association, long exile in an Eastern practice had not weakened this feeling.

Neither had it affected the extreme conventionality of his outlook. The easy tolerance of the East and of the Islands had not enervated his principles of respectability. In spite of the influence of the men he met, with their shaken conventions and their lax code, in spite of the atmosphere about him, he lived and thought out here precisely as he would have lived and thought in, say, Surbiton. It was impossible for him to regard Roderick Cavanagh's mode of life with approbation.

But his exquisite sense of justice told him that he must not condemn the man merely upon facts. It was his character that counted, the underlying motive that prompted him to live as he did. That, Vansittart told himself, must decide his action in the affair, and upon that he had yet to satisfy himself.

To a curious degree responsibility rested upon the lawyer's shoulders. For this reason he absolved himself of any charge of meddling. He was on the spot. His interest in the Cavanagh succession was intense, sincere, and perfectly free from any suspicion of self-interest. And he had some influence over Roderick. He was almost confident

that he could induce the man to renounce his claim, if he satisfied himself that that was the best thing to do. But of that he was not satisfied yet.

Was Roderick, here on the island, or Gerald, in England, at heart the better man? That was all that counted in Vansittart's mind. And that was what he did not yet know.

The boat swung alongside the steamer. The tall figure in white sprang nimbly on to the accommodation-ladder, climbed swiftly to the deck. Vansittart remained in the background, unnoticed, watching critically. At the head of the ladder Cavanagh exchanged greetings with the skipper.

"No mail for me, I suppose?" His voice was crisp and clear. "No, I thought not."

The question seemed merely idle; the acceptance of the answer was untinged with regret. Vansittart had already ascertained that there were no letters for Cavanagh aboard, and, possibly more important, no newspapers. There was, he was sure, nothing to reveal the vital news until he himself chose to disclose it; nothing existed to force his hand.

He approached then, moving in his soft, alert way along the hot deck. Cavanagh turned. Frank, undisguised amazement swept into his face.

"Vansittart! Well, I'm dashed! This is a cheery surprise. What good wind blew you in here?"

He held out a hard brown hand that gripped the lawyer's powerfully. Vansittart did not answer. Much of his power was due to the fact that he never prevaricated or evaded. When he did not choose to say what was in his mind, he simply remained silent.

In silence, therefore, in the softened light under the awning, he closely scrutinised the man before him, the man he assumed to be a virtual beachcomber, whom he considered to have sunk to the lowest stratum of men who still have a right to call themselves white.

He saw a lean frame instinct with a vigour almost inhuman in that tropical heat; a tanned face marked by lines only of repression and self-control; a firm mouth, a chin round and sensitive, yet projecting with unassertive strength; the high, thin, dominant Cavanagh nose, and eyes clear and candid, startlingly light in the brown face, with the curious expression of seeing right through whatever they

rest upon that comes to men accustomed to gaze at far horizons, or to idealistic visionaries.

"He doesn't look a bit like *that*," Vansittart reflected judicially. "I wonder why he. . ."

Cavanagh interrupted his thoughts.

"You must come ashore to my little place," he said; "you, too, Banks."

The skipper, with tact, begged to be excused. He would come later, to dinner, if he might. He wanted to see Cavanagh's trade-goods brought up on deck. His mate, he explained, was a congenital idiot with an unprecedented number of bats in his belfry, and he carried no supercargo.

The two were rowed ashore, seated side by side in the stern of Cavanagh's boat. Both were silent. The younger man seemed embarrassed. Quite obviously he felt the necessity of explaining his position to the man who had at one period of his life taken so great an interest in him, who yet exerted an influence upon him that he made no attempt to deny. But he found it difficult to grasp the right words with which to begin. He was by nature inarticulate.

Vansittart, unwilling to say what was actually in his mind, said nothing. He was readjusting his impressions, confused at finding himself more uncertain, less decided than ever. The sensation generated in him a suppressed irritation. Confound the fellow! How could he, looking as he did, being as he seemed to be, sink to this?

They passed up the baking beach, through a gap in the hedge of tamarisk, up the narrow pathway of crunching shells between neatly-kept flower-beds, on to the cool, shadowed verandah.

It was then that Vansittart first became aware of the woman. She stood in the purple shade of a passage-way, visible at first only as a white shape with a dark face in which shone bright, luminous eyes. Then she emerged on to the verandah. The reflected light from the dazzling ground outside struck up, picking out the clear line of her chin, the curve of her nostrils and eyebrows.

He had thought of her, until this moment, as a native. The fact that she was not came as a blow, shaking that knowledge of fact which, in his mind, warred with presumptions of motive. She was not English, and not a pure European. There was native blood in her. But the greater part of her was probably Portuguese. This, to Vansittart's mind, was some distance in advance of

what he had supposed, yet some way behind English blood.

She had all the seductive attractions of her mixed race — soft, languorous, alluring grace of movement, of gesture and of expression; a low, musical, well-modulated voice; dark, intensely luminous eyes, prodigal of expression, in the depths of which lay profound passion. These things were more powerful in their attraction than merely her features—more finely moulded than was usual in her race—the perfect curves of her figure, her wealth of shining blue-black hair, her more definitely physical charms.

"My wife," said Cavanagh, with a little gesture of proprietary pride at which Vansittart smiled, even as inwardly he winced.

She held out her hand, flushing dusky.

"How do you do?" she said.

She spoke English with a clipped, mincing accent that was curiously attractive.

"You've had tiffin, Vansittart?" Cavanagh asked. "A drink? No? Well, would you like to see round our little place?"

They went, the three of them, about the cool, airy house, the girl moving with sinuous grace. She spoke little, but listened intently to every word the others said. When Cavanagh spoke she watched him with a gaze almost of adoration. Whenever he addressed her by name—he called her "Dolly," an incongruous, unimaginative diminutive of Dolores—she seemed to flush with pleasure.

Vansittart said little and thought intensely. There was something captivatingly boyish in Cavanagh's enthusiasm as he pointed out features he had designed in the place—the godowns, the gardens, the pieces of furniture, the ingenious little devices that had been the work of his own hands. Through it all rang a naïve, clean delight in simple things, a content in small successes and trifling achievements, that found no sympathetic echo in the lawyer's mind, yet that was admittedly far removed from the unaspiring sloth of the decadent piece of human flotsam he had half thought Cavanagh to be.

Later, when the girl had retired to some mysterious back region to superintend the preparations for dinner, the two men sank back in long cane lounge chairs upon the verandah, sundown pegs in the recesses of their chair-arms, cigars between their fingers.

Directly before them the sun, an enormous glowing disc, was dropping into the sea. The sky around it rose in a sweeping arc of crimson, blending imperceptibly into gold, through pale green to a zenith of intense, soft, dark, velvety blue. The great sweep of the sea was darkening to purple. The still waters of the lagoon, just perceptibly ruffled by the faintest breeze, were a sheen of opalescence, marked by moving, scintillating spots of rosy light as the ripples rose and fell. The ship and the boats that lay alongside her were silhouetted as if cut out of black paper and stuck upon a sheet of mother-o'-pearl.

On the air came the pungent, acrid smell of burning wood from a fire, the faint breathing sigh of the breeze through the foliage of the woods, the distant, softened rattle of gear and calling of voices from the ship.

Cavanagh's voice came slowly, hesitatingly, from the depths of his chair.

"You wonder what the devil I'm doing here?" he asked.

The lawyer turned his head, regarded his companion with that penetrating gaze which men often found difficult to meet and almost always impossible to deceive. Cavanagh faced it steadily, his features picked out in gold by the fading glory of the setting sun.

"But you haven't asked me," he went on. "That's just like you. You waited for me to explain. Well, I suppose I ought. You were very decent to me three years ago. You've a right to know."

He paused. The end of his cigar glowed brightly for a moment or two.

"Most people would think I'd just sort of 'gone native.' But you know me better than that."

Vansittart felt a slight twinge of self-reproach and a faint slur upon his perceptive powers.

"Yet even you must be disappointed in me. I haven't come up to your expectations. Have I?"

Vansittart made a slight, deprecating movement. Cavanagh smiled.

"I don't suppose you can quite make me out. Listen, and I'll try to explain. After that final quarrel with the Pater, I came out East to look for Romance. That may seem queer to you. I don't think you ever guessed it. I don't look that sort of fellow, do I? You'd think I was just an ordinary beefy Englishman. But I'm not. I've always had queer notions in my head, imaginations, dreams. But I'm an inarticulate sort of

beggar. I can't express myself well. I don't know that I want to, to most people, but I'd like to try and explain to you. I find even that difficult, though."

The short, tropical twilight was failing, and in the shadow the long reclining figure was becoming vague and blurred, merging into the outline of his chair. Only the cigar-end gleamed like a star.

"I knocked about these waters for two years," he went on, "looking for Romance, and I didn't find it. It may be that you never find Romance when you set out to search for it. It only comes to you when you're not looking. I don't know. But nothing I saw, nothing I did, nothing that happened to me, in the least satisfied my craving. Nothing came up to my expectations, the gorgeous imaginings I had evolved in my own brain."

Vansittart made neither sign nor sound. He had already a faint suspicion of this hidden strain in Cavanagh's character, though he had never appreciated its intense force.

"Well, in time I realised that I couldn't go floating about all my life looking for rain-bows that are not there. I had to do something to justify my existence in the world. You helped me. You took a lot of trouble over me, gave me quantities of excellent advice. You found me a job to do, and I threw it up."

He glanced at Vansittart with a slightly apologetic air, but the lawyer said nothing.

"Now, this is the part that's difficult to explain. I don't know if you'll ever understand. I worked—not because I needed money. I had some. Not much, but enough—but because I had to do something. Instinct urged me to be something better than a slacker and a waster. But I found myself among people who worked simply and solely to make money, who thought of nothing else. Not, you understand, merely to keep themselves alive, but to pile up money for its own sake. That sickened me. I hardly expect you to understand me. I'm a queer chap, I suppose. But we Cavanaghs have never thought much of money for itself. That's why we have never had very much. Our instinct has always been to do things—things that are some use in the world—for their own sake. It's difficult to explain this without sounding like a prig. But you know my family, and I think you will see what I mean. Well, I found I was doing nothing of the kind. I was merely wallowing in a swamp of money-grubbing lies, frauds,

and cheats. I loathed it all. I was doing no good to anybody, not even to myself. The whole thing made me sick."

He made a little petulant movement in the darkness. Vansittart gazed out at the dark sea, the violet-shadowed beach, the posts of the verandah black against a deep-blue, star-powdered sky.

"I quit," Cavanagh went on. "I went wandering again. Not looking for Romance this time, but simply for a niche that I could fill, a job where I could feel I was doing something a bit useful. Don't think this is altruism. It isn't. It's the purest selfishness. I was out to find happiness for myself. I'm so constituted that this is the only way I could achieve it."

His cigar-end glowed for a moment.

"Well, after some knocking about, by the merest chance I blew in here. I found the place in an almighty mess—old Romanez, Dolly's father, the only trader in the place, on his back with a final go of fever and on the verge of slipping his cable; the trade gone to pot; he and Dolly living on bananas and breadfruit; the natives scrapping all day long, knifing and clubbing one another to while away the time till the old man died. They were still too scared of him, helpless though he was, to loot what was left of the place while he lived. But when he pegged out they would come down and raise hell. And Dolly. . . ."

Even in the darkness Vansittart saw the grey eyes flash.

"I jumped at the chance. Here was an opportunity to do something a bit useful. In a small way, I admit. But it appealed to me powerfully. I pitched my dunnage on to the beach. I tried to pull old Romanez round, but it was too late. He went. I had ten minutes' interview with the nigwigs and scared them nearly out of their oily skins. I appointed myself Lord High Muckamuck over them. I stopped their homicidal diversions and set them to work like decent citizens. And Dolly and I. . . ."

He faltered in embarrassment. He had revealed to Vansittart more of his inmost soul than any other man had ever seen, but even to him he could not speak of his love.

"The next time a ship put in the skipper married us. And now"—his tone lightened, and he waved an explanatory hand—"you see. Things are pretty shipshape. I've worked up the trade. The natives roll up steadily with copra and an occasional load of guano. I give them good value in trade

goods. They're the most peaceable, industrious, well-behaved lot of scalawags in the Islands. I sell the stuff to the ships at a fair price. I make precious little out of it myself, and I don't want more. I'm not a dollar-hunting shopkeeper. What's money? Your world, Vansittart, your starched, conventional, respectable world, respects the man who piles up the dollars, and has nothing but contempt for him who doesn't. I don't say it's wrong. Who am I to judge? It may be right. But I can't see that point of view. I'm content. I've taken on a job that seems to me to be some use to other people besides myself. It isn't a big one, but it's one I can fill successfully. I run this island. I hold

little ones. I don't care. I've brought happiness and contentment to a few poor devils who couldn't find it for themselves. And I've found it for myself. And every



"She had risen, child of Nature though she was, to supreme heights of sacrifice."

things together. If I went—I'm not boasting; I'm stating a simple fact—the whole thing would go to pot."

His tone became challenging.

"You can say that it's petty, that I've no ambition, that I've forsaken the big things of life and satisfied myself with the

human being, Vansittart, has a right to honest happiness. You must admit that. He finds it in his own way, but, once found, he has a right to hold it and keep it."

His voice, that had risen almost shrill in his enthusiasm, stopped abruptly. He tossed his cigar butt away. It made a

glowing arc in the darkness, struck the ground below, sent up a little shower of sparks. The red glow vanished, and Cavanagh was once more the quiet, self-

contained, inarticulate man that Vansittart had known.

A black shape moved upon the starlit water, cut the luminous waterline on the violet beach. Dark figures moved about it. The skipper had come ashore, was advancing up towards the house. Cavanagh, with a brief apology, went to meet him.

Vansittart drew at his cigar and stared at the stars. His

His motives, fantastic as they seemed to Vansittart's practical mind, justified him, marked him finer, in his ideality, than that other excellent, unimaginative, conventional alternative, his brother Gerald. Vansittart's half-formed judgment was reversed, his intention altered. But in justifying himself Cavanagh had made the lawyer's task more difficult than before.

Dinner was set on the verandah, beneath the soft yellow gleam of hanging lanterns, with the lovely night breathing a thousand fragrances from the garden below, and the soft sound of ripples on the beach whispering through the stillness.

All through the meal Vansittart listened and watched. He watched the girl, eyeing her husband beneath lowered lids with naïve adoration, turning her eyes towards himself with unveiled suspicion, unconcealed hostility. Half an hour ago he would have deemed her almost an ally. Now, with his intention changed, she was an adversary.



"He bent forward earnestly . . . to renounce the thing that had become, since he heard Roderick's story, the desire of his life."

She would not let Cavanagh leave her if she could prevent it, and it was out of the question that he should take her with him. This, Lady Cavanagh! To Vansittart the idea was unthinkable.

The conversation turned at intervals upon England and upon Roderick's youth. Upon the girl, primitively frank and open by nature, unskilled in dissimulation, the topic had an obvious effect. In the depths of her eyes passionate hostility, mounting fear, grew like black clouds before a gathering storm.

finicky sense of justice had been upheld. The fact of the man's life condemning him as unfit to respond to the call that came to him from the outer world was nothing.

When the skipper returned to his ship—Cavanagh went down the beach with him as far as the boat—Vansittart remained, leaning upon the verandah rail, watching a bright white glow, radiance of the rising moon behind the house, creep inward from the water's edge up the shadowed beach.

He did not hear the girl come to his side. He became aware as if by instinct of her presence there. Slowly he turned his head and faced her.

She stood, her hands behind her. Beneath the simple white frock her bosom was heaving. In the glow of the lamps he saw her lips quiver in an effort at self-command—a quality she had seldom, till now, had cause to exert. Her eyes held him. They blazed with fury, and behind the fury lay its cause—dumb agony and a desperate, torturing fear.

"Why have you come here?" she asked abruptly.

Her voice was very low, little above a whisper, but it vibrated with a passion that startled and vaguely alarmed him. Accustomed to self-control, self-containment, concealment of emotion, in white men's wives, he had never known such a bare revelation of a troubled soul.

He did not answer. Nor did she wait for a reply. She went on rapidly, the words bursting from her lips as if impelled by some terrific force within.

"You have come to take him away. He shall not go. I will not let him go!"

Still he did not speak, and his silence seemed to rouse her to more intense fury.

"If you try to take him away from me," she said, "I will kill you!"

Her voice was calm, almost matter-of-fact, as she said this. It was as if the utterance of the threat gave her relief. That alone gave her words a deadly import. They were no idle threat. Quite simply she meant it. With a sudden movement she brought one hand from behind her back. The yellow lamp-light gleamed on steel.

Vansittart was not in the least afraid, but he was inexpressibly shocked. Brought by his profession into contact with the more profound depths of thought and action, he yet had never found himself face to face with primitive human nature so unashamedly bare, so horrifyingly raw. And this was Roderick Cavanagh's wife! Then as ever, with detached impartiality, he ignored facts and appraised the motives that gave them birth.

"Suppose," he said softly, "it is for his good."

Suspicion swept into her eyes. She did not trust him. She would not discuss the aspect of the situation he set before her.

"I will not let him go," she repeated. Brazenly, triumphantly she affirmed: "I love him."

"If you love him, you will do what is best for him. If the world calls him, if his duty lies"—he made a little gesture towards the sea—"out there, he will be unhappy if he does not go. Will you keep him, like that?"

She eyed him, panting. She was as simple as a child or as a savage. She loved, as they do, with unconscious selfishness. She had exulted, glowed in the fact that Cavanagh loved her, she found constant joy in his presence. Confronted thus suddenly by the problem, as old as humanity itself, that civilised women meet forewarned by knowledge and experience, she was aghast. Yet she had, too, a child's impulsive generosity, its capacity of intense self-sacrifice for an ideal. Piteous bewilderment clouded her eyes, an agony of conflicting passions. A little sob rose in her throat. Slowly she turned, faded, rather than moved, into the dark doorway, became an indistinct white shape, vanished.

Vansittart sank slowly into his chair and carefully assured himself that he was impervious to the enervating influence of sentiment. The only thing that counted was the Cavanagh succession. Roderick was the man to take it up. With his high, if high-flown, ideality he could do much. This girl must not stand in the way. Vansittart would contrive, by invoking some legal quibble, to have the marriage performed by the sea-captain set aside. Roderick would then be free. The girl would then have no legal claim, at any rate, upon him. Vansittart did not doubt his own ability to persuade the young man that the greater claim lay in the call from home.

A brisk footstep crunched the path of shells, sounded on the steps. The tall white figure came along the verandah into the glow of the lamp-light.

"Time for bed, do you think?" Cavanagh asked. "Would you like a peg?"

"Sit down," said Vansittart. "I want to talk to you."

The younger man dropped into a chair. Instinctively he responded to the respect he had for Vansittart, and the significance in the older man's tone bade him listen.

Vansittart lit a fresh cigar. For a moment the glow of the match illumined his lean, thoughtful, wrinkled face, his watchful eyes. He tossed the match away, turned impressively.

"This," he said, "is all very well. But have you thought where it all ends? If you heard that your father was—dead, that you had succeeded . . ."

The younger man nodded.

"Yes," he answered, "I have thought it all out. I stay here. There is nothing to tempt me away. The world can show me nothing to equal this. It cannot offer me the content, the mental peace. It cannot give me a greater opportunity to lead a useful life. And there's Dolly. She'd be miserable in England. She's only been used to this kind of thing."

Vansittart, for once off his guard, smothered an exclamation. Cavanagh sat upright, his eyes flashing.

"You mean I couldn't take her? That I'd have to leave her? I couldn't be such a cur. If I go, she goes. If she stays, I stay."

"You would be shirking a great responsibility, an obvious duty."

Cavanagh flushed.

"There's Gerald," he said. "He'll make a ten times better Lord Cavanagh than I. And he can succeed. I'm dead, Vansittart. Already most people think me dead. Nobody at home has heard of me for five years. I wrote to nobody but you. The skippers and traders about here know my name, but they don't know who I am. If I make no claim, I can be presumed dead, and Gerald takes the title."

"Renunciation?" Vansittart said, almost gibing.

"No. To give this up would be renunciation. Here I have a plain and obvious duty, and I have content. The world can offer me no more."

"Are you sure?" Vansittart urged. "This is no mere question of duty against self-interest. Were it that, you would not hesitate, I know. But this is one great duty against possibly a greater. Your own happiness does not count. The happiness of others you must weigh one against the other, and choose. Do you realise the opportunities for good, the power of helping the world, you would have as Lord Cavanagh now?"

Cavanagh's troubled eyes sought the beach, dazzling white in the moonlight.

"Yes," he said. "But Gerald can do everything there that I could. I feel that no one but I can do my work here.

He's the better man for it, when the time comes."

"The time has come," said Vansittart. "I had a letter this mail. Your father——"

Cavanagh held up a restraining hand, averted his face. Only the round head, the closely-cropped fair hair, were visible to Vansittart. For some little time there was silence. At last the younger man turned, and there were lines about his mouth that belied his forced calm.

"I half expected this," he said. "I knew your coming meant something." His voice shook. "He was very good to me, although we quarrelled. I might have treated him better . . ." Then, as if bracing himself for a blow: "Well?"

"You know," said Vansittart, "what the family, the title, means to me. It has always been bound up with my life. I'll be frank with you, Roderick. I'm trying to influence the succession. I set out to decide who is the better man to succeed, and, if necessary, to persuade the other to renounce his claim."

He knew how powerful his influence was upon the man beside him, especially at this moment. Decision was not for him, but he could affect decision considerably.

"I thought of you as degraded, fallen, disgraced, of Gerald as better fitted for the task. I came here half resolved to ask you to relinquish your claim, to stay here, to remain dead to the world. But I would not judge you till I knew. I came. I saw you. I heard you. I know now who is the right man. It is not for me to decide, but I mean to use every scrap of influence I have over you to persuade you. . . ."

He stopped. Through the window-frame that opened on to the verandah behind Cavanagh a face appeared. Vansittart looked straight into a pair of smouldering eyes, speaking to him with greater power of expression than audible words could convey. And their message was renunciation. She had risen, child of Nature though she was, to supreme heights of sacrifice. She was prepared, for Roderick's sake, to let him go, though her own world would crash to utter ruin and desolation about her.

For the first time for many years Vansittart felt emotion stirring his precise, dried-up soul. Decision came to him now, not as a result of careful reasoning, by stern process of logic, but by a spontaneous impulse such as he had repelled and distrusted all his life. In a gush of sentiment that inwardly amazed him he recalled

Roderick's words, that every human being has a right to happiness, to find it, hold it and keep it. In astonishment he found himself regarding the proposition that the thing that meant so much to him was not worth the sacrifice of two lives.

He bent forward earnestly, lines on his brown face, but his tones as dry and formal as if no motive of sentiment prompted him to renounce the thing that had become, since he heard Roderick's story, the desire of his life.

" . . . to persuade you," he went on evenly, as if he had not paused, "if any persuasion is necessary, to renounce your

claim. Gerald is the man for the title. Your place is here. You are doing good work. You will never do better. Your duty lies here, just where you are."

He winced at the relief that glowed in the grey eyes.

"I had made up my mind," Roderick said slowly, "but—it quietens doubts to find that you agree."

Vansittart did not answer. Again his eyes sought those that regarded him so pitifully through the window-opening, and his own answered them—

"You are worthy of him. But the sacrifice is not needed. He stays."



MAY IN LONDON.

AS I remember London it was always May:
Pale green running over, lilac on the spray,
The pink and white chestnut in every garden small,
And the green flame of poplars like slim girls tall.

The small London houses where Love used to dwell—
May in her green mantle had hidden them well,
Close as in the chestnut the birds would hide
The wee home for the lovers, the groom and bride.

The small London gardens hung out a green screen
More delicate, more airy than any country green,
When, full heart to full heart, the happy lovers heard
Nor the noise, nor the traffic, but the call of the bird.

When I remember London, then I am glad and young,
With bird-songs, and love-songs, and many a song unsung.
When I remember London—ah, Love, could I forget?
Then I am old and weary, and my eyes are wet.

Oh, blackbirds and thrushes and green on the spray!
As I remember London it is always May.
My heart cries for London in a day long flown,
For Paradise in London and the may full-blown.

KATHARINE TYNAN.



"Then he made a longer sortie . . . and gained the strange new tree."

THE GREY RAIDERS

THE ROMANCE OF SOME SQUIRRELS THAT INVADED RURAL ENGLAND

By L. R. BRIGHTWELL, F.Z.S.

Illustrated by the Author

FOR nine months not more than half a dozen of the Grey Raiders occupied the squirrel cage of a certain zoo. Glancing at the big circular plot of ground with the bare tree and nesting-boxes in the centre, and the tall iron rails with "roll-over" tops bounding its circumference, the casual visitor might well have been excused for regarding the inmates as prisoners under very secure restraint. Yet they were, in truth, alien conquerors, merely biding their time, waiting for the day when they should make the woods for a hundred miles around their own past all dispute.

From the first the Grey Raiders began to show some of the more endearing qualities inseparable from the born conqueror. They were active, gay, and fearless, consumed with that burning curiosity which marks the pioneer, and, above all, gifted with a subtle something that helped them to find their way to human hearts as swiftly as their little pliant feet bore them to the topmost branches of the tallest trees. An official label attached to the cage apprised all and sundry that the raiders were specimens of the American grey squirrel, three males and three females, presented

by Mr. —, in the autumn of 1902. A tinted map made plain that the grey squirrel enjoyed a geographical distribution extending from Southern Canada to Guatemala. A seer might have added another map—of Great Britain—showing how presently the raiders would extend from Kew to Fifeshire and from Colchester to Polperro. But the day was not yet come.

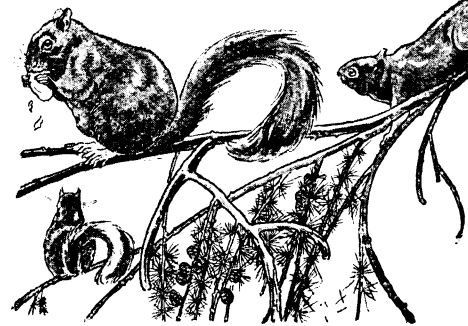
Everybody loved the Grey Raiders. They completely eclipsed the little woodchucks whose burrows riddled the hillock in the centre of their common prison. The lions, the monkeys, even the elephant himself, were scarcely more popular than the chubby squirrels that fed from everybody's hand and cut a thousand fantastic capers all day long. They were known to everybody; even the night watchman found their moonlight frolics a pleasant diversion on his lonely round. As time went on, other qualities became manifest in the Grey Raiders. They lived on good enough terms with the slow-going little marmots, but were at constant war amongst themselves. Though kept amply supplied with food—by the Society and the general public alike—they adhered faithfully to the teachings of a lifetime, and kept their little granaries "against a rainy day" in holes in the ground, as they were wont to do long ere they fell into the hands of man. This led to nocturnal visits from rats—to say nothing of daylight robbery amongst themselves—so that presently most of them bore the scars of battle and more than one found temporary quarters in the sanatorium. At the end of two years the raiders had trebled their number, bringing up their scolding families in the nesting-boxes provided, and under grossly unsanitary conditions that would have disgusted the cleanly marmots on the ground below. The squirrel's toilet is as dainty as any bird's, but—as with the majority of feathered folk—his cleanliness is but skin deep, as anyone who has investigated a squirrel's "dray" well knows. Revelling in the clement climate—a strange experience after the wintry rigours of their native land—the raiders flourished like some other hardy aliens in this most tolerant of countries. They waxed strong and multiplied until, despite such thinning of their ranks as might be brought about by chance purchasers, or barter with other zoological collections, the squirrel run became decidedly congested. Then, on a day, a long-debated scheme took shape. A

rope was stretched from the tree in the centre of the squirrel run to another tree some fifteen feet beyond the enclosing pale. The raiders, bold as brass where men-folk were concerned, and wont to frisk about their keeper's shoulders, nibbling his hat and rifling his pockets, were at first a little daunted by this strange phenomenon. The boldest of them made a tentative excursion of a yard or so along the rope ere whisking back to the prison that he looked upon as home. Then he made a longer sortie, followed by his mate, and gained the strange new tree within the great wide world beyond his cage. As adaptable as those other conquerors, the rat, the sparrow, and the cockroach, the Grey Raiders had come to regard captivity as freedom; now confronted once more with the real thing, they needed a little time to readjust themselves. For three days they hovered between the prison and the park. After that they took to making daylong excursions throughout the zoo, returning to their nesting-boxes, *via* the rope, only at night. By the end of the week only one pair of staunch conservatives remained. The rope was taken down, for none now wished to use it. The conquest of our native woodlands had begun.

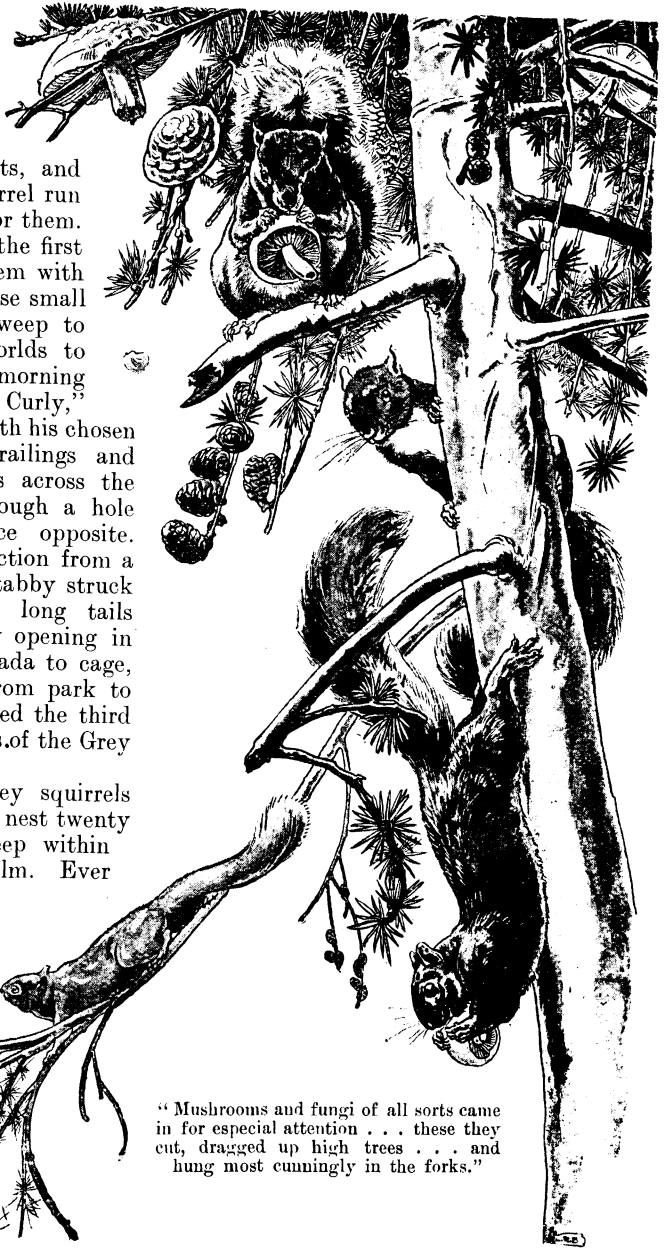
What was happening in this particular zoo we have in mind was also taking place in many another collection, both public and private, in gardens, parks and copses, wherever man welcomed the little grey squirrel for his many lovable qualities, and either shut his eyes to, or else could not see, the other side of the Grey Raider's character. If the squirrel was popular in the enclosure, he was a hundredfold more so now that he had been presented with the freedom of the park. Given patience, a quiet manner, and a pocketful of nuts, anyone might now become a St. Francis of the squirrel folk. They swarmed up visitors of all kinds on a moment's introduction, rummaged pockets, perched on hats, coaxed wailing infants into shouts of delight as they perched on prams and baby carriages, amused shelter-bound crowds upon the wettest day, pillaged refreshment stalls, stole from beneath the very paws of monkeys, fought with each other on the broad walk, six inches from the approaching elephant, and generally comported themselves as the roystering little ruffians that they were. No place was sacred to them. They might be seen on every roof and tree and fountain basin, in every trough and feeding-pan, patronising every table in the restaurant, skirmishing

amongst musicians in the bandstand, travelling gratis upon bath-chairs, even spoiling the stationery in the secretarial office. They reared their insolent broods in lofts and cupboards, deserted nests, and undeserted, too. As the squirrel run had soon become too small for them, so did the park at large lose the first charm of novelty, and irk them with a sense of littleness. But these small Alexanders did not sit and weep to think they had no other worlds to conquer. One windy March morning a pair of Grey Raiders, one "Curly," oldest of the gang, together with his chosen mate, slid down the park railings and passed like two grey streaks across the public road and scuffled through a hole that invited in a tall fence opposite. They narrowly escaped destruction from a passing taxi, and a prowling tabby struck at them—too late—as their long tails vanished through the narrow opening in the fence. From distant Canada to cage, from cage to public park, from park to private estate, and then opened the third chapter in the onward progress of the Grey Raiders.

Night found two little grey squirrels cosily ensconced in a leaf-lined nest twenty feet from the ground and deep within the hollow of a huge old elm. Ever



"Mushrooms and fungi of all sorts came in for especial attention . . . these they cut, dragged up high trees . . . and hung most cunningly in the forks."



taking life as they found it, they had taken this nest without care or question, making a bloodless entry to a foreign citadel, apparently. The nest was deep and roomy, and incredibly foul. It reeked with a sour bad odour, at once strange and familiar to the two little interlopers—it was the smell of squirrel. With heads and forepaws pressed tight to stomach, and tail wrapped over all.

they slept a heavy sleep, for the day's house-hunting had been long and arduous. A bright moon rose above the tree-tops, and the raiders presently awoke to see, framed in the doorway of their cave and thrown into bristling silhouette by the moon, a squirrel's head the like of which they had never seen before. They were conversant with many kinds of squirrels—chickaree, banded, and

ground dwellers—in their native woods, but the newcomer was a stranger in every sense. A third smaller than the grey squirrel's, the head in the doorway showed tall pointed ears, rendered taller still by being topped with bushy tufts of long stiff hair. A second head with smaller ear-tufts popped up behind the first and paused for a moment in a silence tense and still. Then, with a shriek, the silence broke. The air was rent with hissing coughs and shrill crescendoes of demoniacal chattering. We speak and write loosely enough of "fur flying," but in the present instance it flew literally enough, in tufts and bunches and curling wisps, as the four combatants whirled around the tree. The leafy nest seemed to boil like water in a pot. One moment the squirrels were defying each other from opposite sides of a branch, the next falling headlong locked in a deadly embrace. Courageous in defence, the squirrel is usually a coward in attack. Might too often outweighs right in the wood as in some wider spheres, and soon the English red squirrels were in full retreat. The raiders chased them, spitting and scolding, for a hundred yards, then scampered back to their ill-gotten fortress, scrambling up the elm's tall column with feet that left a bloody trail behind them. Old Curly's mate found her way somewhat clumsily. The skin of a squirrel's tail is notoriously thin, and in this case had been stripped clean off, leaving a raw and hideous skeleton exposed. In the days that followed, the denuded portion presently dried up, and later fell away. But a tailless squirrel is not long for this world. Curly's mate was sadly hampered. She could not follow her mate in his flying parachute-like leaps from branch to branch, or loop over the ground, five feet at a time, with his graceful undulations. Her entire life was spoiled; its closure was but a matter of time.

In those early days of spring the Grey Raiders set about the exploration of their new domain in earnest. Strangely foreign, it still had enough in common with their native land to make them feel at home. Many of the trees, the oak, beech, maple, and the pine, they knew, but much of the undergrowth was altogether fresh. Unlike the vast forests they had once known, the present sheltered wood, hedged and fenced and nursed into a pampered security, held but few foes. Here were no marten, lynx, or wolverine, only a few weasels and slow-paced, placid badgers. For several

weeks the two little grey, goblin-like rodents enjoyed a squirrel's Eldorado. They stripped the bark from birch and maple, leaving the sap to ooze forth from the bleeding stems, damaging past all recovery as many trees as they attacked. There were long sweet days when the two went bird-nesting, sucking eggs, nibbling the screaming fledglings, and flinging both eggs and young overside for the pure joy of wrongdoing. Used as they were to occasional raids from red squirrels, the birds were utterly nonplussed by these hardened marauders. Their size and savagery rendered them immune to the majority of feathered folk, and many a broken nest and parent heart were left behind that springtide in the track of the Grey Raiders.

Mid-April found the raiders still without a permanent home, for the dray they wrested from the red squirrels proved later to be far from weatherproof. But Fortune ever favours the bold. Just as the raiders were contemplating the honest restoration of an old and deserted magpie's nest (as a last desperate resource), they hit upon the very place for which they had been looking. This was another squirrel's eyrie, one of several in a mighty oak. Squirrels are provident in all their dealings. Far-sighted little beasts, they make, perhaps, quite half a dozen "emergency" nests, where they may take their young when danger threatens. In the present instance the raiders had a choice of three such nests; but the one that really took their fancy already contained four little hairless creatures, blind and feeble, close-covered with a counterpane of moss, and buried deep in a hole also curtained with the same material, and invisible to all except a squirrel. Evidently the mother had snatched a moment to gain something for her own sustenance. This was the psychologic moment. The raiders seized it with both forepaws and their teeth. As Punch, in the age-old puppet show, flings down the baby into the delighted audience, so did the little grey murderers do to death the luckless young.

As the last little body struck the roots below, the outraged mother returned. With the awful, silent grip of a bulldog, the raiders seized her. The only sound the wretched animal made was the snap of her neck as it was broken just behind the skull by the chisel teeth of Curly. With hind feet convulsively kicking at the female raider's stomach, the red squirrel was forced backwards out of the hole and,

with a plop, her body joined the butchered innocents amid the leaves and bracken shoots. Then complacently the raiders licked their scratches, polished their round, impudent little heads, and curled up for a lengthy sleep. Not till dusk was falling did they venture forth again, this time into a world against them. The pushful Curly scrambled down to the lowest fork but one, and then, with body flattened, limbs and tail outstretched, projected himself, as a flying squirrel might, at the nearest branch below him. His tailless mate followed suit and, bungling her landing, fell. She fell upon her feet, it is true, but a squirrel cannot afford to fall at all. Two great saucer eyes had been watching the squirrels as they emerged from their stolen residence. Squirrel makes a very welcome variant to the owl's somewhat monotonous diet of mice. Without a sound, death fell from out the sky—fell upon Curly's mate, and bore her upwards and away across the tree-tops to a certain ogre's castle in a distant belfry. Half an hour passed in rather aimless searching for his mate, and then the widower, dashed and frightened, but by no means inconsolable, returned to the hole in the oak, and slept a sound and dreamless sleep, such as the just might well envy.

Morning found a pair of Nature's indefatigable scavengers hard at work giving decent burial to the only corpse which the rats and carrion crows had left. Two enormous black-and-yellow burying beetles were busy shovelling away the earth from beneath the body of a baby squirrel. Bit by bit the tiny corpse was slowly but surely sinking. They worked with head and feet, unmindful of the bold grey squirrel watching them. Curly watched for fully a minute, then deliberately seized the larger of the beetles and devoured it. This done, he reached across the body and ate beetle Number Two. In the course of that morning's wandering he made a very tolerable meal. He dug up the hoards of several red squirrels, sucked a clutch of thrush's eggs, and caught an early butterfly—this last act executed with amazing deftness. But though he was without any sense of responsibility, and as self-centred as any cat, the gay bachelor life did not appeal to Curly at this time of year. Before the week was out he had found another mate, one of his own kind, who also had ventured forth from the zoo, whom he wrested from her rightful lord after a fight that filled the wood with shrill abuse and cost his rival the sight of one

eye and a lacerated ear. But Curly the victorious was as gay as any grasshopper. Together with his mate, he passed the day in whirlwind courtship, up and down the tree-trunks, round their boles, or in flying leaps from branch to branch. They spent the night in a blackbird's nest, an unlovely mess of feathers, smashed eggs, dirt and vermin. They breakfasted at sun-up on a mighty mushroom and a fallen cockchafer, and then it was they found the ideal home—the tree of mystery.

It stood by itself in a little clearing. It was square-topped, and with the strangest foliage, of a flat formation and straw-like in texture. From out of this there sprang one amazing branch. For three hours the squirrels played around this phenomenon, running over it, examining every crack and cranny. Then at last the brazen Curly found the hole he had been looking for, for nearly every tree of decent size must have a hole of some sort in it somewhere. When we reflect that this cottage had been locked securely for the last three months, it is not strange that Curly should have found the only entrance to be *via* the mysterious branch upon the crown of this extraordinary tree—in plain English, the chimney.

When evening fell, the squirrels had decided definitely to make this their permanent abode. They had incurred only one serious fright, when Curly knocked over a box of knives and forks. They both dashed across the room, out by the chimney, and then sat, watching and trembling, in the branches of a tree near by. It was not until twilight that they sufficiently regained their courage to return to this new treasure trove, but at last they did again scuffle down the chimney and presently hit on the ideal squirrel dray, already made for them and only waiting to be tenanted. They found a feather mattress.

Space will not let us tell of all their doings in the joyous days that followed. Secure from rain—the squirrel's worst enemy—from bots and ticks and burrowing wasps, those unwelcome lodgers that the squirrel is too often forced to entertain, secure, too, from a certain velveteen-clad gentleman who now patrolled the woods, the raiders lived in clover. Their impudent family scaled and tore the cottage curtains, spoiled everything they could not gnaw, slept in the seats of horsehair chairs, fought in the fireplace, and, as the days shortened, filled shelves and cupboard tops with toothsome stores of beechmast, acorns, cob nuts, fir

cone seeds, and toadstools by the hundred. It was the perfect squirrel's life, and far too good to last.

It did not even see the autumn out. In early October the cottage was once more taken over by the head ranger and his family. A genuine Nature lover, as every ranger must be, he treated the squirrels with more sufferance than might have been their lot at less sympathetic hands. They and their kind were already beginning to earn a bad name as wanton destroyers of eggs and despoilers of young trees, but as yet their name had not reached the limit of its evil notoriety.

Weaned in August, Curly's family of six found quarters in a mighty beech a few yards from the now reopened and renovated lodge. Inheriting their parents' sociability, they became unofficial retainers at the ranger's house, and daily came to beg for rations at the family board. At the same time they worked hard with a cautious eye to the approach of winter. A score of holes and crannies, in trees and on the ground, held their winter stores, which grew each day, save in the wettest weather. The squirrels had a different way of dealing with everything. Experience had taught them that a fir cone, if left to ripen on the tree, discharged its winged seeds, scattering them far and wide in a way that made them difficult to find. Therefore the squirrels cut the fir cones ere they ripened—a method they applied, though needlessly, to the sweet chestnut burrs, which might have been allowed to fall to earth of their own accord. Mushrooms and fungi of all sorts came in for especial attention. The glowing parasols of scarlet fly-cap, sickly russula, chanterelle and bull's foot, these they cut, dragged up high trees with infinite exertion, and hung most cunningly in the forks, the stalk of the fungus pointing downwards, whilst the cap rested secure upon the two diverging boughs.

But, alas, for the Grey Raiders, with nuts and roots to spare, they would not be content. Like most rodents, the squirrel likes a little carnivorous relief to an otherwise vegetarian diet. The damage done to pheasants' eggs in the spring was as nothing to the havoc wrought on pheasant chicks in summer. Now, when the snow was piled high in the dales, still graver misdemeanours met the keeper's eye. Cold and crisp as the winter was, it was nothing to the squirrels that had weathered in their own land thirty and more degrees of frost. One cold day,

tramping on his rounds, the ranger spied, hung by the head in the fork of a tall ash, a pair of young chickens that had been missing some days from his own run. This was beyond ignoring. Squirrel clubs he disagreed with. They were too often the excuse for wanton butchery, a brutal indulgence of that innate love of cruelty so often to be met with in the less enlightened districts. Still, something must be done. When next year brought with it a noticeable increase in the amount of damage done, to trees and game alike, the word went round that what had once been looked upon as a mere harmless pet threatened to be a scourge. As for the red squirrel, once the doyen of the woods, he was now exterminated whereso'er his Western cousin had been introduced. Where the red squirrels drove their tunnels through the snowdrifts, there the raiders met them and fought pitched battles, as many a rustic collector of squirrel furs well knew. At home in his vaster forests, and with a wealth of natural checks upon his increase (apart from man's demand for skins and in some districts for squirrel meat), the grey squirrel was well enough. But man may not lightly interfere with Nature's niceties of balance. On more than one occasion we have reaped the whirlwind where we thought to further progress by the introduction of some alien plant or animal which has increased out of all proportion to its new environment. As with the rabbit in Australia, and the Canadian weed throughout the fresh waters of half the world, so it threatened to be in our own wood coverts with the Grey Raiders. The edict went forth that their ranks should be, if not actually decimated, at least thinned.

* * * * *

Bang!

A tiny head popped out from a round hole ten feet up in the beech tree's mighty crown—a round head wide-eyed with terror. A grey squirrel came running along a branch opposite the hole. Bang! The raider quivered, dropped from the branch to another below it, ran along, leaped fifteen feet on to another still lower, tore madly up the face of the tree, and then, losing its hold, fell backwards and down, down, forty feet to the earth—dead!

Bang!

The round head at the hole in the beech abruptly disappeared. Curly had been clinging to the lower rim of the hole, and now, losing his head completely, fell back and on to his mate. Though no quicker-

witted than most rodents, he knew there was something very wrong in the behaviour of the squirrel he had just seen. He associated it, too, in a dim way with that extraordinary sound.

Bang!

With a common impulse, Curly and his mate sprang from their hole and, leaping from branch to branch, made their way to the edge of the copse.

Bang!

A squirrel ten inches before them fell writhing down through the branches. Another and a louder explosion from below scorched the outer fur of Curly's tail, but still he held his course. Now the edge of the wood was in sight. Then came a

together, and under cover of its waving flower-spangled roof tore madly forward. A weasel, bird in mouth, cursed them as they passed, and made the female squirrel leap so that she landed, all four feet together, in a lark's nest, to the ruin of the eggs.

Bang! The sound came more faintly now. Bang! A chance shot hissed above the grass, and then, without a ripple, the two squirrels took the water. More than



"As for the red squirrel, once the doyen of the woods, he was now exterminated whereso'er his Western cousin had been introduced."

stretch of long grass, and then the river mouth. Seven long miles of water it was across the estuary. There were deep pine woods upon the other side, but this, of course, the squirrels could not know. They only desired to get away from this awful "something" that all but burst their eardrums and made their mates behave so strangely. There it was again.

Bang!

The two lithe forms struck the grass

one form of destruction lay in the water beneath them and in the air above. The fish hawk and the pike had been the undoing of larger creatures than the little Grey Raiders, but fortune favoured them. Together they struggled onwards, sometimes resting on a piece of floating timber, keg, or broken basket. Once they sprang upon the bows of a passing skiff, to the amazement of the oarsman. Time and the long weary miles wore on, and when they took the

water once again, their round bullet heads showed like two monstrous fishing floats in the evening glow. Great fish rose around them, and once Curly fouled his hind legs in a clump of waterweed. But the Grey Raiders had set their foot on British soil for good. Persecution might delay, it never could completely crush, their cause. As the darkness settled down, two little dragged

forms crawled up the bank, through the palings, and so into the dim, cathedral-like aisles of the mighty pines. Though drenched, exhausted, and starving, Curly and his mate were anything but conquered. The pine wood should awake to find that yet another world had fallen to the onward march of those undaunted nomads of the Western wild—the Grey Raiders.

GILLYFLOWER.

WHEN God He spoke the word,
The souls of the woods obeyed,
From out the grass at Candlemas
Woke February's maid.

Beneath a Lenten moon
Gorse loosed its brown cocoon;
And the daffodil, in flounce and frill
Of floss-silk, followed soon.

Though Epiphany's star be set,
What princely spice o'erflows
When the Glory of the Snows leads in
Sweet Daphne, red as a rose!

The withy of the marshes grey
In garment of silver shakes,
And every flower at its own hour
Its honeyed casket breaks.

Some there come with sobs
And sighs of the storms o'erspent,
And some with kingly splendour
Whence the east wind went:

Golden the censers swing,
Green waves the shining blade,
At His own hour and word of power
By Whom all things were made.

Oh, when each flower unlocks
Its scents, all sunshine blest,
At our heart's door knocks the breath o' the stocks
Around the lost home's rest!

And at God's will, e'en yet,
Lest we should home forget,
Stock-gillyflower in the mid-May shower
Touches us still—tear-wet.

ALICE E. GILLINGTON.



"Jim Smallwood was gazing at a large green parrot in an equally large cage, which took up a lot of space in his small room."

THE GREEN PARROT

By W. L. GEORGE

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

"IT'S no good, Bob," said Jim Smallwood, as he sipped his lemonade with an air of melancholy.

"Oh, never say die!" Bob replied. "After all, your hair's not grey yet. Why, a fellow I know, just like you and me, he'd been rotting in an office for twenty years; he picked an old gent out of the mud he'd fallen in, dodging a tram, and the old buffer took him into his own firm, and now he's got his own house and his car."

"If I see an old gent lying in the mud," replied Jim Smallwood gloomily, "I'll heave him out. But those things don't happen often. All I know is, I'm twenty-seven; I've been in the same office for eleven years, and I haven't had a rise for three years. Besides, business isn't what it used to be. In the old days a man expected to start for himself some time. Now what's

he to do against all the combines? Can't even raise enough capital to advertise. It's no good, Bob; we'll just go on getting older, and perhaps we'll have saved up enough to pay for the funeral when our time comes."

"Look here," said Bob, "why don't you go to the boss and tell him you want a rise? Have it out with him."

"I haven't the nerve," said Jim Smallwood. Indeed, the young man was hardly the figure to impress his employer. He was short, very thin, his nose was inquiring, and his chin receded. A very gaudy striped yellow-and-green tie, bright yellow shoes, unpressed trousers, and unattractive fingernails suggested the neglect mixed with defiance which characterises the clerk who has stayed too long and too unsuccessfully in the same office.

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When at last his complaints stopped, for lack of sympathy, Jim Smallwood swelled out his chest and, in a tone which he thought philosophical, said: "What's the good of worrying? What about a game of billiards?"

"Right O!" said Bob, as they left the smoking-room of the vast people's restaurant.

But, as they went, Jim Smallwood exhausted the tale of his troubles. "There's no chance in our office," he said again. "There's no hope unless my Aunt Mary dies and does the decent thing."

"Expect to get much out of it?" asked Bob respectfully.

"So-so. She's pretty well off, I should say, but close; one can't find out. Those old geysers, you know, they never tell. She always says she'll leave me something."

"Then you shall pay for the table," said Bob. An amiable wrangle began, and they played.

II.

JIM SMALLWOOD'S preoccupations were much stimulated when, a week later, a telegram came saying that his Aunt Mary had died in the night. All through the funeral he encouraged visions of the will. So it had come, the delirious moment. How much had she left him? A thousand? Ten thousand? Who knew? The old girl did herself well. One couldn't tell. The lawyer came to the funeral, and it was agony not to question him. Also the lawyer did not seem to hurry, for no letter came next day, nor the next. Jim Smallwood lived in a perpetual fever; he even considered a wild plan—to go to the lawyer to make his own will. Then the lawyer would have to tell him how much he was down for in Aunt Mary's will. Just as he was about to adopt this desperate expedient, a letter came. It said:

DEAR SIR,

I have to inform you that, pursuant to the decease of Mrs. Mary Caroline Smallwood, it is my duty to indicate the contents of her will in so far as they affect you. You are designated as the heir to the late Mrs. Smallwood's green parrot. I shall be glad if you will let me know as soon as possible when you can take delivery of the bird, which is at present in charge of the late Mrs. Smallwood's maid.

Yours faithfully,

GRINDLEY, SONS AND CRUMLIN.

Jim Smallwood remained some time in a state of coma, the letter in his hand. Energy had run out of him; his figure took on the appearance of a suit of clothes thrown on the armchair. He was too broken to feel indignation, and it was some time before he managed to whisper: "Her parrot! A—p-p-p-parrot!"

At last he jumped up and practically rushed about the little room, applying to the parrot and to the memory of his aunt expressions and adjectives which were usually foreign to his mild and civil tongue. "A parrot!" he bellowed. "And I'll have to pay for its seed!" It was nonsense. It was a joke. His aunt had always been fond of a joke. It would be just like her. Smallwood tried to believe this: it would have been like Aunt Mary, but would the lawyers have carried on the joke? He felt that people with names like Grindley and Crumlin didn't go in for jokes. A little later he decided that he could not let the matter alone. He must do something—protest. Perhaps the will could be upset. He'd go and see the lawyer.

Grindley, Sons and Crumlin did not comfort him. This firm with the complicated name took the shape of an enormous man, who exhibited cuffs as large as Jim Smallwood's shirt-front, and who, after booming at him for a little while, showed him the will. It was true: Aunt Mary even went so far as to say that she bequeathed her dear companion to her dear nephew in view of the never-failing interest he had exhibited during her lifetime in the welfare of the bird. With frantic regret Jim Smallwood remembered the long years during which he had brought that parrot bits of sugar and quarters of apple.

"I won't have it," he said feebly.

"Of course you need not," said Grindley, Sons and Crumlin. "The law allows of a declaration being made—the cost of which you must of course defray—in which you decline to take possession of the legacy."

"What will become of the parrot if I do?" asked Smallwood.

"It will fall to the next-of-kin, and, failing his acceptance, the parrot will revert to the State."

"Well," snarled Smallwood, as he left the office, "the State can have it. I won't."

"Just as you think fit," said the enormous man. "It is, however, my duty to draw your attention to the fact that it appears to have been the late Mrs. Small-

wood's wish that you should assume charge of the parrot."

This apparently innocent observation was destined to have upon Jim Smallwood profound effects. All went well during the afternoon. He happened to be busy, and also he tried to use work as a drug with which to dull his disappointment. By the evening he was even telling himself that all great men had setbacks. But after dinner, when he was alone in his room, a certain worry seized him. The lawyer had said it was Aunt Mary's wish. Oh, let her wish—Yes, but she attached importance to this parrot. She was very fond of it. Supposing Aunt Mary's spirit were watching over that parrot. What would she think if it reverted to the State? How would the State treat it? Would the parrot go to the workhouse or to the Zoological Gardens? Night fell, swift and dark; Smallwood's meditations grew more and more unpleasant. After a time he discovered that he was getting the horrors, and looked round the room apprehensively. Aunt Mary's spirit hadn't appeared yet. Perhaps she was only giving him time. Jim Smallwood rushed out of the house, took a long walk, avoided the Park, which looked lonely. He didn't want to go home, but he had to, and got into bed very swiftly. He had to turn out the light, and then began a combat which lasted several hours, a struggle between scepticism and superstition. Superstition won.

III.

Two evenings later Jim Smallwood was gazing at a large green parrot in an equally large cage, which took up a lot of space in his small room. The brute had already made trouble with the housekeeper. It sat there, blinking at him with circular eyes, and occasionally nibbling the middle of its chest.

"A parrot!" moaned Smallwood. "I wonder what would happen if I wrung its neck?" He played with the door of the cage, then drew back. It was as if for a moment an icy hand had held his wrist. He expressed this by saying: "I suppose it will have to stay."

Fortunately, Jim Smallwood still had to occupy himself with his career, and that evening at last decided to compose a letter to the boss. The parrot gave no trouble. It was the most silent parrot Smallwood had ever met. As a matter of courtesy, he now and then remarked "Pretty Polly!" but the parrot received this with the im-

passiveness tinged with offence that a head waiter conveys when spoken to by a newsboy. Indeed, the parrot's immense superiority worried Smallwood so much that he turned his back upon it while he wrote. Also his demand for a rise was difficult to compose. There were three lines of argument: first, Smallwood had taken over half the work of a fellow-clerk when the latter left; second, he had been eleven years in the office and had had only three rises; third, another man in his department had had a rise. He wrote it all out. It sounded pretty feeble, and so he sat searching his mind for further arguments. Nothing arose in him. He walked about the room, but the parrot worried him. It sat on its perch, and its circular eye followed him as he moved. One couldn't get away from this eye, and no arguments came. At last Smallwood went up to the cage and said: "I'm going to bed, cocky, to sleep on it. What do you think of that?" The parrot remained silent; evidently it didn't think its new master worth talking to.

While, next morning, Jim Smallwood was eating an unsatisfactory breakfast of porridge, the preoccupation of the night before recurred. He supposed he'd have to send that letter and trust to luck. The coffee was bad. Life was vile. Suddenly, behind him, a high and rather nasal voice remarked: "Try old Barham." By Jove, why hadn't he thought of that? Why, of course, old Barham had made him a sort of offer. "I've got brains like a sieve," thought Smallwood. "What I've got to do . . ." He stopped and turned round. It had not struck him that it was the parrot had made the suggestion. Must have been the parrot. Jim Smallwood stared into the corners of the room. It might be Aunt Mary, or Aunt Mary through the parrot. He was terrified. Brilliant as was the suggestion, its origin was appalling. He decided to interview the parrot. "Look here, cocky, what do you mean by 'Try old Barham'?" No reply. "Say it again." The parrot blinked. It was impossible to make it talk. After a while, wearied by the chatter of the human being, the parrot closed its eyes and ostentatiously went to sleep.

Jim Smallwood reflected that this was uncanny; still, it wasn't bad advice. The thing to do was to see Barham, get a written offer from him and show it to the boss. In the street Jim Smallwood threw off his superstitious fears. The miracle couldn't be explained, but never mind.

The thing to do was to get the rise, and now he knew how to do it.

IV.

EVERYTHING went very well. Old Barham renewed the offer on slight provocation. When the boss saw that Jim Smallwood had a chance elsewhere, he could not bear to let him take it. He gave him a rise, and promoted him to the position of second-in-command of his department, in replacement of a clerk who had just left. Jim Smallwood was very happy. His rancour against Aunt Mary was much assuaged by his promotion and increased income. The circumstances of his rise in the world were, it was true, a little awkward, for he did not much enjoy the society of the sagacious bird. He treated it well—in fact, he gave it indigestion through excess of fruit—but he didn't like it. He would have liked to tell Bob about it, but realised that Bob would only think him crazy or drunk. So he had to carry alone the point of view which he summed up: "That parrot knows too much."

This train of thought led to another. If the parrot, never mind how, had thought of sending him to old Barham, it might know a lot more. It might tell him how to get on. He questioned it several times, but the parrot took not the slightest notice. It maintained the magnificent silence which had been broken only once. So, after a while, Smallwood began to forget the recent happening, and to put it down as one of those inexplicable flukes which do not occur again. Besides, he was having trouble at the office. He was much harder worked as second than he had been before, because the head of the department nursed the usual definition of the second-in-command: "The man who does the work of the chief, but doesn't take his credit." Also there was a lot of jealousy, owing to Smallwood's promotion. His new subordinates pretended to misunderstand his instructions, or said that the telephone was engaged when he wanted to get through; when he wanted a shorthand-writer, someone had sent them

all out to buy ribbon. Smallwood knew offices, and realised how subordinates can make life wretched; he knew also that one couldn't get at them, for to his face they were servile and efficient.

Also there was something wrong that he could not understand. A fortnight after his promotion the boss grew curt. He didn't seem to like Smallwood as much as when he promoted him, which was very unfair,



"The green parrot in its cage, meditating profoundly."

since, to maintain his new dignity, Smallwood had bought a grey tie and had been manicured. One day the boss even gave a direct instruction to a subordinate of Smallwood's instead of putting it through him. The young man had to accept the insult—he could do nothing else—but he nearly gave way to his temper when, one afternoon, the head of the department being away, a departmental conference took place which Smallwood was not asked to attend. It was maddening. There was something wrong in the atmosphere, and Smallwood told the parrot all about it. Unfortunately, this did not seem to interest the bird, and the atmosphere grew worse. Evidently the

boss disliked Smallwood, and he didn't know why.

One Sunday Smallwood stayed at home to be alone and to discover what he could have done. It was raining heavily. The window-panes were coated grey with water,

fact, he had looked up quickly enough to see the parrot close its bill. It was the parrot. What did the parrot know about the office? He'd never even mentioned Gresham to the parrot. He knew that. Why should he mention Gresham, the most insignificant



“The parrot! The parrot!”

and the sky was grey. He stood alone in a gusty world, and so unhappy that, as dusk fell, he bowed his face between his hands. After a moment, in the dim room, a high, remembered voice uttered four words: “Gresham is a traitor.”

This time Smallwood did not pause to analyse. He knew who had spoken. In

of his subordinates? Obviously the parrot was bewitched. To keep it any longer was impossible. “But what shall I do with it?” groaned Smallwood, raising his arms to the ceiling. “What will it say elsewhere if I send it away? What does it know? What doesn't it know?” Then he realised that he must live on with this wretched

bird. Live on! Parrots lived a hundred years! What was he to do?

But Smallwood was entirely an ordinary man, and so soon passed from meditations on the parrot to meditations on Gresham. He didn't like Gresham. Nasty, servile person—not inefficient, no, but nasty. A traitor? How a traitor? It was nonsense. The parrot didn't know what it was talking about. By degrees Smallwood convinced himself that the parrot had made a mistake. He decided to think no more about this. But it was difficult to ignore the words of a bird that had once spoken to such advantageous purpose. All through the next day Smallwood was pursued by this idea: "Gresham is a traitor." Well, he must expose him. But expose what? His subordinate did nothing peculiar. What peculiar thing could he do? Still, he didn't like Gresham, liked neither his voice nor his boots. Day by day he grew more certain that the parrot was right. How right he couldn't tell, but right. By degrees the obsession grew such that Smallwood devised a plan. He shared a room with Gresham and a junior clerk. One could enter it either from the corridor or through the small room in which sat the boss's secretary. One afternoon Smallwood sent the junior clerk to the other end of the town, and, telling Gresham that he would be away an hour, left the office. After five minutes' wait in the corridor he carefully came in again through the small room, and opened the door just in time to allow the boss's secretary to see Gresham holding up against the window the outer sheet of Smallwood's blotting-pad. The capture was complete, and when the facts were laid before the boss, he acknowledged that Gresham had been informing him of small delinquencies on the part of Smallwood. "I'm very sorry," said the boss. "I never ought to have listened to him. Henceforth I'll know you're a man to count with."

V.

It was after this incident that parrot-worship affirmed itself. Owing to Smallwood's rise in life, he now lived in a pleasant bachelor's flat, and he planned for the parrot comforts due to the origin of all good things. A new and larger cage was bought, fitted with interesting swings, bars, and spiral staircases. Smallwood fed it himself, and if the parrot had not been wiser than his master, he would probably have died of caviare and pineapple. But the parrot

cared for none of these things. When his master swung the swings in an enticing way, the parrot considered him with an eye that contained not even surprise. A follower of tradition, he said nothing, but thought the more.

So Jim Smallwood, impressed by this massive indifference, left the parrot to its philosophical meditations, and devoted himself to his career, which was going very well, for the boss, having been made remorseful by the Gresham affair, where he had listened to slanders on Smallwood, gave him the headship of his department when his old chief left to go to another firm. So Jim Smallwood found companions more fashionable than his friend Bob, bought patent-leather shoes, went to dances, and smoked gold-tipped cigarettes four inches long. Months passed, and at twenty-nine Jim Smallwood was no longer the seedy clerk without prospects, but the departmental manager who might ultimately aspire to partnership. As time passed, he began to forget the interventions of the parrot. This was, in a way, the parrot's own fault, for it had failed to keep up by conversation the effect it had originally made. Jim Smallwood, though he looked after it, respected it less. Now he addressed it as "Cocky," which he had given up after the parrot's second performance. Once he even hung his hat on the cage, but the parrot did not condescend to peck at it.

So Smallwood was not ready for the third incident, which happened one morning, while he was eating a greatly improved breakfast brought up from the restaurant below. As he shook the pepper-pot, rosily meditating on his chances of winning the cup in the Metropolitan Tennis Tournament, in a still nasal, but possibly contrite tone, the parrot said: "Colton is dead." Jim Smallwood dropped the pepper-pot on the eggs and bacon. He was surprised. It was so long since the parrot had said anything, and this piece of information did not strike him as new. He thrust back the feeling of uncanniness, for he was getting used to these messages from the void. He occupied himself only in wondering what the parrot meant. An idea invaded him.

"I say, cocky," he remarked, "you aren't lucid this morning. What's it got to do with me if young Colton did get killed in a motor accident a week ago? How do you know, anyway? Been reading the hatched, matched, and dispatched, eh, old bird?" No reply. "No," he went on, "I don't

expect you'll explain. You're a taciturn sort of fowl, aren't you? Still, I suppose you know your job. Only, what do you mean?"

It was only later in the day that it occurred to Smallwood to look up in a reference book the composition of Colton's firm. It comprised only old Colton—who, according to "Who's Who," was sixty-six—and the dead Geoffrey Colton.

"Oh," said Smallwood, after a while, "why didn't I think of that?"

He ought to have thought of it, for the firm he was employed in was in the same line as Colton. Even before he looked up the facts, he was sure there were only two directors. He supposed that it hadn't struck him. How it was that it had struck the parrot was another question. But as Smallwood had given up bothering about the parrot's sources of information, he picked up his hat and went to see old Colton. He had the sense to take with him the written offer he had once received from Mr. Barham. Provided with this, and able to prove a rapid rise in his own firm, he found that the conversation with the old man became very satisfactory. Within a month Jim Smallwood was manager of Coltons. Within a year he was made a director, with a small capital interest.

Far away now were the days of cheap striped ties and of unmanicured hands. Now Mr. Smallwood—whom none called Jim except the better-established members of his club—was seen always in the most costly serge; he wore lawn shirts, a gold signet-ring (bearing somebody else's crest); he played golf on the same course as dukes and millionaires; when he entertained at an hotel, he ordered first and asked the price later. So it was not wonderful that within a few years, when Jim Smallwood was thirty-three, when the death of old Colton had resulted in a reconstruction of the firm, the young man became chairman of the corporation. The parrot in these days did not speak very often, nor was it very useful, except that once it said, "Ten twenty-two," which reminded Smallwood that he had to catch a train. But this didn't matter. He no longer needed the parrot as he did before, and, beyond having the brass of its cage gold-plated, which did not interest the parrot at all, he took little notice of it. It is true that at that time Smallwood had another preoccupation, namely, Lucy Delamere, the twenty-one-year-old daughter of Delamere, the millionaire, beside which

even Coltons seemed unimpressive. Mr. Delamere let the young man come to the house, and did not trouble about him, but within a few weeks Lucy, who had hair like autumn leaf and eyes like aquamarines, began to show, by sidelong glances and rare, swift blushes, that she responded to Smallwood's interest. He understood; he did not need the parrot to inform him now, for no disadvantage arrested Smallwood's progress. He was young, trim, rich, and had acquired a certain social ease. At dances, picnics, games, the relationship knit itself closer and closer, and when at last he obtained from Lucy a private assignation, his victory was assured. She said "Yes," and three months later they were married.

VI.

A FEW days after his return from the honeymoon, as Smallwood came back to his bedroom from the dressing-room, bathed, shaved, and pleasant, his wife, who lazily lay in bed, sipping chocolate, put down the morning paper and said: "I say, Jim, are you really going to call in the Sedbergh loan?"

Smallwood wheeled from the mirror. "How? What?" he cried. "Who told you that? Of course I've got to do it. Sedberghs are old business friends, but I happen to know they're rocky, and we must get our money in as soon as we can. But I only decided that last night. So perhaps you'll explain."

"Of course I'll explain, Jim. You've done nothing but talk about the Sedbergh loan during the night."

"Do you mean to say that I talk in my sleep?"

"Yes, Jim. Lots of people do it. But you're clear. Hilda used to do it when we were small, but I couldn't make her out."

"What sort of things do I say?"

"Oh, just like that! You say a thing again and again and again until it gets stuck in my head. And you go over a lot of your past life. Don't be nervous. Nothing serious has come out yet."

The blue eyes were very soft as she chaffed him. "Last week you were talking about your old days in other offices. The first thing you said was, 'Try old Barham.' Later on you said, 'Gresham is a traitor.' Then——"

"The parrot! The parrot!"

"What do you mean, Jim?" asked his wife.

"The parrot! The parrot!"

"Jim," she cried, sitting up and throwing back her massed russet hair, "what's the matter with you? I'm frightened."

"The parrot!" murmured Jim, and sat down. Then he told her the story, and this exposed the mystic rôle of the sagacious bird.

"The rogue!" said Smallwood, opening the bedroom door. In the sitting-room they could see the green parrot in its cage, meditating profoundly on nothing at all. "So it was you," said Smallwood, "who heard me ruminating during my sleep my very best ideas—those ideas that one thinks of only unconsciously. And I thought he was bewitched. Well, he's been a great nuisance,

Lucy. I think we'd better have his neck wrung."

She seized his hand. "Oh, no, Jim, don't do that! After all, if it hadn't been for him, if he hadn't repeated your dreams, you wouldn't have got on, you wouldn't have got me, if you still thank him for that."

When he released her from his arms, Smallwood was meditative. "I say," he remarked, "it's all very well, but it seems to me that I may go on having my best ideas when I'm asleep. Perhaps we'd better have him back in the bedroom."

She smiled as she stroked his hair. "Well," she said, "I don't know. You seem to forget that in future you've got me—as your parrot."



SPANISH SONG.

TEARS to the sea,
Sighs to the air,
Love goes—where?

Out on the wastes of the drifting wave,
Where tears are woven, they find their grave.
Borne on the paths of the restless air,
Sighs may be lost and met somewhere.

Tears to the sea,
Sighs to the air,
But love goes—where?

AGNES-MARY LAWRENCE.



"The revenant."

A QUEST

By C. KENNETT BURROW

ILLUSTRATED BY EMILE VERPILLEUX.

ARNAUD DORAIN, who always rose early, entered his study with that almost noiseless step which had surprised his household servants into a mental attitude of reverence tempered with dismay. Did he, they asked themselves, ever sleep at all? The light always burned late in his study, yet he was back in that room, with his skull-cap perfectly adjusted, at seven o'clock in the morning. Moreover, he was fully dressed at that hour. Arnaud Dorain was never seen outside his bedroom in a dressing-gown, though occasionally, in cold weather, he wore a kind of pontifical robe.

As he entered the room on that late autumn morning, his ageing housekeeper (she was a Breton, short, stout, clear-complexioned and blue-eyed) rose from her

knees before the fireplace. Only she, she believed, knew precisely how the master liked his fire laid and kindled.

"There, monsieur!" she said. "In ten minutes you will be as snug as a cat in a basket. But I am amazed that at your age you should still rise so early. It is not right, monsieur, and you near death two months ago!"

"Perhaps, my good Ninon, I am like the cat and sleep at odd moments. And you must remember that the old need less sleep than the young."

"Oh, I have heard that! But I assure you that it is nonsense."

"You will admit, however," said Dorain, smiling, "that one can rest without sleeping?"

"Those without mind, yes. But you,

monsieur, a man of brain, can only repose in sleep."

"Well, well, Ninon, permit me at least to be quiet."

Ninon shrugged her shoulders, gave a final touch to the fire, and departed. As she closed the door Dorain heard her murmur—

"Heavens! That a man so wise should be so stubborn!"

"Stubborn, certainly," Dorain said to himself, moving slowly to the window. He looked down upon a garden enclosed by a high wall which gave to the Villa Heloise a sense of complete seclusion. It was that wall which had prevented Dorain from leaving the house when there began to spring up around it the more pretentious buildings of an opulent suburb. A new Paris had spread its tentacles, as it were, about him, but that wall saved him from their grip. And he could always, when he chose, retire to the older Paris, where he still kept the very modest third-floor rooms which had sheltered his untiring youth and seen his first successes.

He turned from the window and sat down at his writing-table, upon which everything was arranged in perfect order. His gaze wandered about the room, lingering here and there on a picture, a piece of sculpture, a cabinet of Chinese lacquer-work, a tapestry panel of the fifteenth century, on bookshelves where rare bindings glimmered. He had been a great collector, and the Villa Heloise was full of treasures, each one of which had its story, its definite place in his life. And now he would soon have to resign it all: he had received the first warning: in five years, perhaps less, the end would come. And what were five years?

Yet he could contemplate the event with composure, even with interest, for the spirit of inquiry and adventure lived in him still. Moreover, though the season was autumn, he felt a sense of spring, that curious uplifting which comes unaccountably and unexpectedly from the secret places of nature and the human spirit. He mused for a time in the mood which precedes the creative impulse. Then he drew writing materials towards him.

Before he had written a dozen words Dr. Sylvestre Bourdon was announced; he followed close at Ninon's heels.

"Ah, my good doctor," said Dorain.

"Do I come too early? What—at work already? You are incorrigible, dear master!"

"Probably. Will you have breakfast?"

"I came to beg for it," said Bourdon.

"Then we will have it here."

The pair regarded each other with profound interest—the great doctor who was young, the great writer who was old.

No doubt another physician might have intervened between Dorain and the great shadow, but Dorain did not believe it possible. No doubt there might be a greater master of irony and romance than Dorain, but Bourdon knew none in the world of living men.

"You have been overworking," Dorain said. "Your eyes seem to be of a different colour, and they are too bright."

"That is true."

"When do you propose to rest?"

"At once."

"Good," said Dorain.

"And you?" asked the doctor. Dorain laughed softly.

"That is what Ninon has been talking about. Rob me of work, of the intimate intercourse between brain and hand, and you rob me of all."

Sylvestre pondered. He knew that he could not control Dorain, and the soul of the physician was humbled before this man, whose passion for expression nothing could daunt.

"You are, of course, going to take this rest away from Paris?" Dorain asked. The doctor nodded. "In the midst of the paternal vineyards at the Château Drusillon?"

"No," said Sylvestre. "To tell you the truth, I have not yet decided where to go. I only know that in a few hours I shall be out of Paris. I have made all the necessary arrangements about my work. And I shall leave no address."

"That, perhaps, is wise. And yet. . . . Have you seen our inimitable friend Madame Blanche fleur lately?" A momentary shadow, like that of a cloud on clear water, darkened Sylvestre's eyes; he frowned slightly. But almost instantly these signs of discomposure gave place to a frank and engaging smile.

"She appears to avoid me," he said.

"That is probably your fancy," said Dorain.

"Nevertheless, it troubles me, possibly because my nerves are jumpy. For that reason I need quietness and seclusion to think matters out."

"But have you not already thought that matter out?" Dorain asked, with something of apprehension in his tone.

"So far as I am concerned, yes. But I ask myself whether I have sufficiently considered the point of view of the lady of whom Madame Blanchefleur is, shall I say, only a part."

Dorain smiled gravely.

"I think she is all one, all of a piece. However, my good Sylvestre, I will not presume to offer you advice."

"Understand," said the doctor earnestly, "that I am unchangeable. I have never wavered, nor ever shall. But that decides nothing."

"Well, well, take your holiday. But do not give too much freedom to your imagination, or your nerves will become worse. Half the business of life is to restrain the imagination. Some women, I admit, are incalculable, but Madame Blanchefleur——"

"We would both, dear master, defend her against the world!"

After the doctor's departure Dorain took up his pen again, struck out the few words that he had written, and fell into meditation. His serenity, the sense of harmony with which his day had opened, was a little disturbed. When Ninon came to remove the breakfast things, he said—

"Will you explain to me, Ninon, how it is possible for the adorable to be absurd and the wise foolish?"

"Monsieur himself is better able to answer that question than I." Dorain rubbed the side of his nose reflectively with a straight forefinger.

"I confess," he said, "that I cannot answer it. No, after years of patient inquiry and observation, I cannot always be sure. . . . Have you ever been in love?"

"Never, monsieur," said Ninon, "though my poor husband—God rest his soul!—was a good man."

"Ah," said Dorain, "then I am afraid that you cannot assist me."

"But surely, monsieur, you understand everything that can possibly be known about love? Your books, so wonderful that they weary and trouble my poor mind——"

"Enough, my most excellent critic!" laughed Dorain. "I am beginning to realise that I know nothing."

On the following morning, at about eleven o'clock, Dorain was standing with his back to the fire, looking down, with a kind of wistful satisfaction, at the pages which he had just written.

"I am becoming perfectly simple at last,"

he murmured. "Even Ninon will be able to understand this."

At that moment the door opened and the housekeeper came in, somewhat out of breath, for the stairs were steep and she had taken them at a plunging run.

"A lady, monsieur, desires to see you at once. I was to give the name of Madame Blanchefleur, but as to that——"

"Very well, you have given it. I will see her here at once."

The visitor herself was in the room before Ninon had time to turn round. The housekeeper closed the door and descended the stairs heavily, as though to give assurance that she, at least, had no curiosity.

"Well, my child," said Dorain, "what is the matter?"

"Everything, dear master." Madame Blanchefleur sank into a chair, loosened the furs at her throat, and leant forward with clasped hands. Her whole attitude, as well as the expression of eyes and mouth, was appealing, and yet behind that there was a suggestion of tremulous defiance that was afraid of itself.

"Where is Sylvestre Bourdon?" she demanded.

"I have not the faintest idea," Dorain said.

Tears shone in her eyes. "You are playing with me," she cried, "and my heart is all fire and ice!"

"No, I am not playing with you. He was here yesterday; he told me that he was going away. He did not himself know where, nor did he desire anyone else to know."

"Ah, then he was desperate!"

"On the contrary, his self-control was unruffled." The curious glance that Madame Blanchefleur gave Dorain indicated disappointment rather than satisfaction. "And you must remember that people who choose to vanish without leaving an address are not always desperate."

"You reprove me when I am overwhelmed with trouble."

"No, dear child, I do not reprove you."

"Then it is because you think I am not worth it."

"I think you are worth everything and more that a man could give," Dorain said quietly. She took one of his hands and held it.

"Forgive me," she said. "I am not myself. . . . The fault is my own. I have tried him too hardly. You remember that you wrote to me: 'Do not delay too long'?"

"Yes."

"And I have delayed too long."

"I see no reason to suppose that—yet," said Dorain. He was deeply touched by her trouble, but his affection for Sylvestre had claims upon him almost equal to those of Madame Blanchefleur. "Have you finally and absolutely made up your mind?"

"Do you forget what I said to you at Belleforêt?"

"The statement was incomplete. We were interrupted."

"I have hesitated only that I might be sure. Two hours ago——" She paused and engaged Dorain's glance with something like a challenge.

"Two hours ago—well?" he said.

"I was prepared to make submission."

"And now?"

"What should one do," she asked, with a quick flash of her familiar self, "when one finds that the victor has run away?"

"I assure you that he did not run away. He needs rest. He is weary to death."

"Weary to death!" She spoke the words in a subdued cry. It was as though she had felt suddenly the wind of the destroyer's wings. "And I have added to his weariness!" She rose and moved towards the door.

"When I said weary to death," Dorain explained, "I used an unfortunate phrase. Sylvestre has overworked himself—that is all."

"Naturally you try to make light of it to me."

"I speak precisely as I believe. There is no need whatever for alarm."

"That is your sincere belief?"

"Absolutely, my child," Dorain said.

"You reassure me—a little."

"Be reassured entirely. . . . Come to see me to-morrow. I may have news of him."

Madame Blanchefleur left the Villa Heloise, stepped into the waiting blue-and-white automobile, and drove rapidly to her own house. No letter from Sylvestre had arrived. She had hardly expected one, yet its absence hurt her like a reproach, and in spite of Dorain's assurance she still persisted in associating Sylvestre's disappearance with herself. If he were indeed ill, why had he not told her? After a moment's reflection the answer came—because that would have seemed like an appeal to her sympathy, and he was incapable of snatching at any unfair advantage. And now that very appeal, unknown to him, ached in her heart.

She closed her eyes and sat perfectly still, concentrating on him all her thoughts, hoping

that some flash of intuition, perhaps some telepathic communication, might reveal to her the place of his retreat. When nothing whatever happened, she concluded that he was not thinking of her—a rebuff that she accepted with a humility that was perhaps too self-conscious to be altogether sincere. Madame Blanchefleur had never before felt so helpless; here was a situation so vague that it could not be grasped. Time, no doubt, would resolve it, but at this juncture time, without the relief of action, was like a nightmare that paralyses the limbs.

A bell tinkled. She rose, finger on lip, listening. Had he delayed his going and come to her, after all? And if so, should she . . . She moved towards the door with outstretched hands. It opened to admit Jacques Coriot, maker of pictures. Her hands fell straight to her sides.

"Heavens! You, Jacques!" she said.

"Oh, I admit that I am of no importance. But why this scorn?"

"Why, friend, it is myself I scorn!"

"Then," said Coriot, "the world must be coming to an end. What has happened?"

"Nothing," snapped Madame Blanchefleur.

"There are certainly terrible possibilities of tragedy in that," Madame Blanchefleur laughed; he had eased the strain; she was recovering herself. Jacques, who had been a little startled by his reception, perceived this, and went on—

"In my case it is not nothing. I come to you for sympathy and help. I have quarrelled with Hélène."

"Again? You two are children—always," said Madame Blanchefleur. "What is it about this time?"

"A parrot. She has accepted the gift of a parrot. It talks. It has the voice of a fiend and the malice of a demon. And Hélène adores it."

"Well, my friend, a man of will can become accustomed to a parrot."

"Impossible! The most profound affection goes to pieces in the presence of that bird, and its presence seems to be everywhere. It destroys my mind, my sense of colour, everything!"

"And Hélène, naturally, refuses to part with it?"

"Absolutely," said Coriot.

"It is, then, a quarrel to the death?"

"Of the parrot, possibly. I feel myself capable of murder. . . . But if you, for example, were to take a passionate fancy to the creature, Hélène might bestow it upon

her best friend, and then you could lose it."

"A very pretty scheme, Jacques. I will consider it."

"A thousand thanks," said Coriot gravely. The absurdity of this brought to Madame Blanche fleur an immense relief. Fear, even misgiving, concerning Sylvestre almost vanished, but there remained the conviction that something in his attitude towards her had changed, and the impatience to discover what that change implied increased.

"Jacques," she said abruptly, "where is Dr. Bourdon?"

"At the hospital, probably."

"No. He is not in Paris." Coriot rose at once to the implications of the situation. He sensed the reason for Madame Blanche fleur's curious condition when he arrived, and he congratulated himself that his prattle had been ready.

"Then your information," he said, "is later than mine. I met him yesterday morning in the Rue de Rivoli. He said nothing of leaving Paris."

"Precisely. . . . How did he look? Did you see any change in him?" Madame Blanche fleur's gaze was fixed on Coriot with a disturbing intensity. "You hesitate!" she cried.

"He looked—abstracted, shall I say, and rather tired."

"He is ill. I must find him." Coriot stared at her. He knew most of Madame Blanche fleur's moods, but he had never before seen any indication of madness in them.

"How on earth do you propose to do it?" he asked. "France is larger than a pocket-handkerchief. I assume, of course, that you have made inquiries at his house and at the hospital."

"That would be useless. He told Arnaud Dorain that he would leave no address."

"Then you must wait for news."

"I cannot, I will not, wait!" Madame Blanche fleur cried. She was flushed, her eyes shone, her lips quivered. Jacques almost envied the doctor.

"Be reasonable," he said. "You cannot put the police on his track."

"Reasonable! You demand reason of a woman who——" She paused.

"Is in love? No. But Madame Blanche fleur——" Coriot did not finish the sentence; he looked at her with a whimsically serious expression.

"You think it impossible for Madame Blanche fleur to be in love? You are an imbecile!"

"It is sometimes good to be that. Consider the possibilities of imbecility. Even Hélène——"

"Yes, yes—even Hélène!" Madame Blanche fleur collected herself. Her mind became fluent, as it were, a stream retraversing the valley of memory. Now it swept forward with an easy flow, now it was arrested and seethed, with something of turbulent laughter, round a jutting promontory, and again it nursed its heart in a deep pool.

"It is sometimes, perhaps always, difficult to be entirely oneself," she said. "The mind becomes confused. One asks: Is this I, or another? Do I hear my own voice or that of my other self which is only part of myself?" Coriot had no answer ready. "As you say, my friend," she went on after a pause, "France is larger than a pocket-handkerchief. I cannot get into my car, grip the wheel, start the engine, and trust to luck for the right direction. . . . But I can drive to the Château Drusillon."

"Sylvestre's home? Fortunate man, to have a father who grows one of the best wines in the world! You think the vanished doctor may be hidden amongst the vines?"

"It is possible. At any rate, I may find out where he is."

"Why not telephone to the Château Drusillon?" Coriot asked.

"Why? Have you no common-sense? Because if he is not there, a telephone message would create disturbance and anxiety. But it would be natural enough that I should call at the Château Drusillon on my way to some other place. I know the good people. I have been their guest."

"No doubt you are right," said Jacques. "Remember that I never claimed to possess common-sense."

"I will do you that justice," said Madame Blanche fleur. "Now listen. One never knows what may happen even on a minor adventure, and I confess that I feel nervous. I may need support. Will you give it?"

"I am in the mood for anything. That parrot——"

"Good," said Madame Blanche fleur. "Return, then, at two o'clock. I shall be ready for you."

After Coriot's departure Madame Blanche fleur felt not only consoled, but exhilarated. To decide on any course of action, barren of result though it might prove, was better than to sit still. She admitted that the crisis might be imaginary, but imagination had to be dealt with as resolutely as the

most concrete fact. Moreover, the Château Drusillon seemed, in her recollection of it, to be a haven of tranquillity, a centre of fine and generous simplicity, a nurse of the quiet spirit. If she were asked to remain there for a day or two, she would, she thought, accept the invitation. She would, in a sense, be near Sylvestre. Accordingly she made a

"One never knows what may happen," he explained apologetically, "and a workman should always carry his tools with him. I may see some place that will tempt me. And, anyway, Paris is not Paris to me while that parrot defiles Hélène's abode."

When Madame Blanchefleur, on that earlier occasion, had visited the Château



"Fablon's mouth opened and closed. Then his lower jaw dropped as though his tremulous chin were weighted."

careful selection from her wardrobe and packed the dress-basket that had been specially designed for the carrier of her car.

At five minutes to two Madame Blanchefleur stepped into the blue-and-white automobile and rested her right hand on the steering-wheel. At two o'clock precisely Coriot appeared, carrying a small valise and a couple of canvases wrapped in brown paper.

Drusillon, in the Department of the Marne, the rising tide of summer had laved the land in green and blossoming waves. Now it was bare in the chill ebb of autumn, a leafless country, whose sombre undulations seemed as barren as the grey roof of cloud above. But she resolutely refused to permit this change to depress her; it was in Coriot that the mournful spirit awoke.

"Give me summer and the sun," he said. "I could never paint a winter landscape, and the beauty of autumn makes me want to weep. This is neither one thing nor

fell into silence for some time, and then suddenly laughed.

"Well, what is it now?" asked Madame Blanchefleur.

"I had a vision of Hélène in adoration of — the parrot. It's infernal name is Céléste.

Both their heads are on one side, both sway a little, both are suspicious."

"A pretty picture, surely?"

"Ah, if only Céléste could sing!"

It was almost dark when the car jolted slowly



"Madame Blanchefleur paid no heed whatever to the agitated Fablon. Her eyes, with dilated pupils, were fixed with extraordinary intensity on nothing."

the other. Its effect is merely to make me angry."

"You are a petulant creature, Jacques," said Madame Blanchefleur, who appeared to him to be a kind of Fate driving him to the core of desolation. "Will you ever learn to take things as they come, and be thankful that they come at all?"

"I have no more philosophy than an oyster," he sighed. "I know it, I deplore it, but what would you? I am as I am." He

into the little town of Dormette, whose main street, in which the lamps had not yet been lighted, was cobbled and narrow. A few windows, dimly illuminated, showed the vague interiors of shops in which customers and attendants had the appearance of melancholy participators in some gloomy ritual. Looking carefully from side to side at buildings which appeared to share the decline and decay of the year, Madame Blanchefleur's quick eye detected a small

brass plate on which she made out "Aristide Maribot, Avoué." Instantly she recalled the genial lawyer whom she had met at the Château Drusillon. He was a confidant of the Bourdons and a particular admirer of Sylvestre. She stopped the car, alighted, and rang the bell.

"Surely this is not the Château Drusillon?" Coriot asked, slipping into her seat and putting a hand on the steering-wheel.

"No, but I may hear some news from M. Maribot." Coriot resigned himself. The atmosphere of Dormette pleased him. The place, at that hour, had a quickening sense of unreality, as though it might suddenly vanish or be transformed into something different.

The door was opened by a young man who, when the dim light from within fell on Madame Blanchefleur's face, drew back a step. Such clients were rare. He recovered himself, bowed profoundly, showed Madame Blanchefleur into a tiny waiting-room as bare as a church pew, and vanished through another door, repeating to himself the lady's name. Madame Blanchefleur heard the grating sound of a chair violently pushed back, and in a moment Maribot, opening the door with a jerk, stood before her.

"Is it too late for you to see a new client and, if I may say so, M. Maribot, an old friend?" The lawyer's expression was puzzling; there was in it the most frank pleasure and admiration, but there was also a kind of dismay, as of a man caught in some doubtful act.

"Mademoiselle—madame, I am deeply honoured." He paused and rubbed his chin. "I am also," he added, with an appealing smile, "somewhat perturbed. . . . Have you called at the Château Drusillon?"

"I am on my way there," said Madame Blanchefleur. Maribot sighed, almost gasped, with unmistakable relief.

"In Heaven's name," cried Madame Blanchefleur, "explain yourself! Is anything wrong at the Château Drusillon?"

"With our good friends the Bourdons—no. They have their health. Yet, as a man of truth, I am bound to admit that all is not well at the Château Drusillon."

"M. Maribot, I beg you to speak plainly. I am in no mood to be entertained by mysteries." Madame Blanchefleur's tone was restrained but imperious; Maribot caught in it the throb of anxiety.

"If you will be good enough to come into

a more comfortable room, I will explain," he said.

Maribot's private office was so crowded with deed-boxes, papers, and law books that one might have supposed every householder in Dormette to be a client. A closed stove radiated a lifeless but malignant heat. Madame Blanchefleur dropped into the chair Maribot placed for her, and her hands went to her throat.

"You are unwell?" He darted to a side-cupboard and produced a tall bottle and a glass.

"No, no, monsieur. . . The window—open the window!" He obeyed and then, turning with an apologetic smile and gesture, he said—

"We of Dormette bake ourselves. It is a foolish habit."

Madame Blanchefleur breathed more freely. "And now, monsieur, what has happened?" His benevolent eyes, with their habitual expression of mild astonishment, met her inquiring gaze almost with humility.

"Am I," he said, "speaking to Madame Blanchefleur or to that great artiste—"

"As you will, but for the moment I am more Madame Blanchefleur than that other."

Maribot nodded as though he entirely understood.

"Our good friends," he said, "have been driven from the Château Drusillon."

"By whom?"

"By Monsieur and Madame Fablon, their daughter Barbe, and the dogs." Maribot's gravity suddenly gave way; he chuckled. Madame Blanchefleur, to her own astonishment, laughed. "And yet," the lawyer continued, "it is no laughing matter. At the same time—" He chuckled again.

"At the same time?" Madame Blanchefleur repeated.

"It is a matter for amusement—sympathetic amusement, you understand."

"Tell me," said Madame Blanchefleur "of Monsieur and Madame Fablon, their daughter Barbe, and the dogs. Is it the story of a circus?" Maribot threw up his hands.

"One could deal with a circus," he said. "But these others. . . . You know that Monsieur and Madame Bourdon are people of infinite goodness of heart. They suffer for their virtues. M. Fablon is a man of immense wealth, one of the *nouveau riche*. Some time ago he purchased the Château Guex, which is on the other side of the river."

"I have seen it," said Madame Blanchefleur.

"M. Fablon spent great sums on altering and decorating the interior of the château, and it would appear that the old place resented this. In effect, portions of it threatened to collapse soon after M. Fablon and his family had moved into it. An ancient building, madame, does not understand modern methods, and M. Fablon had employed an architect who had disturbed the structural balance. It was necessary for the Fablons to remove themselves for a time, and M. Bourdon offered them the hospitality of the Château Drusillon."

"And they have abused that hospitality?" Madame Blanchefleur asked.

"Not wilfully; it is simply that they do not understand. Conceive the situation. The Château Drusillon, which was as peaceful as a summer garden, becomes a scene of distraction. M. Fablon has no sense of repose, Madame Fablon criticises Madame Bourdon's most cherished possessions and beliefs, and Barbe sings. And it may be said that the dogs also sing. I repeat, conceive the situation!"

"Intolerable!" said Madame Blanchefleur.

"Therefore, for a little repose, they fled from their home and took refuge—with me." Madame Blanchefleur rose.

"They are here, in your house?"

"Yes, but the Fablons do not know that."

"Does Dr. Bourdon know?"

"I persuaded Madame Bourdon to write to him yesterday. He might come to their relief at any moment."

"Madame Bourdon wrote to Paris?"

"Certainly. I myself posted the letter." Then, Madame Blanchefleur reflected, they did not know that Sylvestre had left Paris. Her quest, so far, had been in vain. Nevertheless, she was glad that she had come.

"Take me to our friends," she said.

Maribot led Madame Blanchefleur up and down odd little flights of stairs until they reached a gloomy hall, feebly lit, which smelt of dampness. He paused with his hand on a door.

"Shall I prepare them?" he asked.

"No. I have an idea, monsieur. The preliminaries need not be delayed." Maribot opened the door to admit Madame Blanchefleur, and followed her, treading stealthily.

"Natalie!" Before Madame Bourdon had time to rise, the other's arms were round her in a close embrace. Sylvestre's mother—good, honest soul—was assured that half that caress was for her son.

Emile Bourdon got to his feet slowly, advanced a step, paused, and scratched his head. Then both his hands shot out to grasp Madame Blanchefleur's.

"You come like Spring," he said. "M. Maribot already looks younger." He added, in an eager whisper: "Do you come from the Château Drusillon?"

"I was on my way there when I saw M. Maribot's name, and that, naturally, made me desire to see M. Maribot himself." The lawyer bowed and seated himself beside Madame Bourdon.

"Alas," sighed Madame Bourdon, "the Château Drusillon is no longer ours!"

"That is absurd, Henriette," said Bourdon. "Do not make a tragedy out of nothing."

"Are the Fablons and the dogs nothing?"

"My wife exaggerates a little," said Bourdon, turning to Madame Blanchefleur.

"You yourself, Emile, have spoken of those people in the most violent terms. Heaven knows what might have happened if M. Maribot had not taken pity on us."

"I have already explained to Madame Blanchefleur," said Maribot, assuming a judicial air, "and she has an idea."

"An idea?" Henriette looked perplexed. The eyes of all three were fixed on Madame Blanchefleur.

"I have heard," she said, "of Monsieur and Madame Fablon, of Barbe, and of the dogs."

"The dogs," cried Henriette, "are all forehead, like *crétins*."

"You wish to be rid of these undesirable guests, but your sense of hospitality restrains you. It is clear that relief must come by the intervention of something unexpected."

"Admirably stated," Maribot murmured.

"Even if Dr. Bourdon arrived," Madame Blanchefleur went on, "what could he do? His hands would be tied. But I, my friends, might succeed without hurting the susceptibilities of anyone—even of the dogs." Bourdon scratched his head. Henriette smiled faintly; she was out of her depth, but resigned.

"If you will telephone to your housekeeper that I am to be received as a guest," Madame Blanchefleur said, "the Fablons can take no offence. You had better remain with M. Maribot."

"Yes, yes," said the lawyer. "They might be in the way."

"What you suggest," said Bourdon, "is quite simple. But what good is it

going to do? Surely the presence of Mademoiselle——”

“I am at present Madame Blanchefleur.”

“That makes no difference. Your presence, I repeat, will be more likely to induce those people to remain than to depart.”

“That is true,” said Maribot. “But Madame Blanchefleur has an idea.” She broke into a rippling laugh that had the effect of sunlight; the faces of her interlocutors brightened.

“You forget,” she said, “that I can act. Trust this affair to me, that is all I ask. . . . M. Bourdon, the telephone.”

“You consent, Henriette?”

“So long as there is no danger. Those dogs——”

“By the way,” said Madame Blanchefleur, “I have a friend who may be of service. He is in my car outside. I had almost forgotten him. I beg for him also the hospitality of the Château Drusillon.” Bourdon hurried from the room, and Maribot followed him.

“Who is this friend, Natalie?” Madame Bourdon inquired anxiously.

“Jacques Coriot. You have one of his pictures.”

“I remember. Sylvestre gave it to me.” Henriette looked at Madame Blanchefleur appealingly and stroked her hand.

“Jacques is very much in love,” said Madame Blanchefleur, “but not with me.”

Bourdon and Maribot returned, bringing Coriot with them. He glanced reproachfully at Madame Blanchefleur.

“These gentlemen have rescued me,” he said. “You, madame, would have left me to perish of exposure in the streets of Dormette.”

“It will be necessary, madame,” said Maribot, “for you and M. Coriot to remain here for an hour or two. If you arrived at the Château Drusillon on the heels of the message, M. Fablon might be suspicious.”

“He is of a suspicious nature,” said Bourdon. “He is also superstitious, which is absurd. He believes in lucky days, counts seven before eating, and commits other follies.”

Madame Blanchefleur glanced at Coriot; his expression was one of resigned bewilderment. Not only had Madame Blanchefleur forgotten him, but she had also forgotten that he knew nothing of the Bourdons' exile. In a few words she explained the position, and added—

“Now, Jacques, be wide awake. Miss nothing! You are in the plot!”

“I become myself again,” he said. “This is beautiful.”

“I have ordered my cook to have dinner ready in half an hour,” Maribot said. “She is agitated, but she will do her best.”

It was eight o'clock when Madame Blanchefleur and Coriot set out. The night was heavy and dark; the temperature had risen, and a slight mist veiled Dormette, a mist that caught the throat. It was as though that land of vineyards exhaled, in the year's decay, a suggestion of the must of the wine-vats.

“Have you any plan?” Coriot asked, as the car, escaping from Dormette's cobblestones, regained its dignity of motion.

“A dozen,” said Madame Blanchefleur, “but I must survey the ground before opening the attack. You must follow my lead, Jacques. You must listen and watch me like a cat.”

“Anything you like. . . . That wine of old Maribot's——”

“It was Château Drusillon.”

“The man who grew it,” said Jacques, “is an honour to France.” They fell into silence. Though Madame Blanchefleur's quest had failed, she was at least about to act as deputy for Sylvestre in a delicate matter. That brought her nearer to him.

The gates of the Château Drusillon (which presented its back to the road) were open, and Madame Blanchefleur, every sense quickened by memory and anticipation, drove slowly round to the terraced front, which faced the vineyards and the river. She shut off the engine, and the car drew up noiselessly before the door.

As Coriot stepped out, the door opened.

“Ah,” said Madame Blanchefleur, “the good Elise Matisse has been on the watch! Come, my friend, the play opens.”

The housekeeper received them in the wide hall. The occasion demanded ceremony, but Elise was too distressed to observe nice formalities.

“Madame,” she cried, “think of it! Those good people driven from their home by——”

From the drawing-room on the left came the sound of a piano, then the yapping of dogs, and then a voice that sang:—

“Car c'est chose suprême
D'aimer sans qu'on vous aime,
D'aimer toujours, quand même,
Sans cesse,
D'une amour incertaine,
Plus noble d'être vaine,
Et j'aime la lointaine
Princesse.”

Those words, when Madame Blanchefleur sang them, had thrilled many a heart that had kept inviolate its chamber of memories. But the voice that sang them now was wire-drawn, mechanical, colourless. Madame Blanchefleur shuddered.

"So they had to endure that!" she said.

"Oh, that is nothing!" said Elise, with fine derision. "But you will go to your rooms. I have already prepared M. Fablon for your arrival. He and those others can wait until you choose to present yourselves. It is a pity, madame, that the Château Guex did not fall on them."

Elise, her small active body quivering with energy and irritation, her alert black eyes bright with eagerness, conducted the new guests to their rooms. Then she returned to Bourdon's library, opposite the drawing-room, where she sat in the dark, like a creature ready to pounce.

"Now," she said to herself, "something will happen. Monkeys and birds cannot live together in the same cage."

Madame Blanchefleur made her toilet with particular care. The gown of black and gold that she had worn on her previous visit to the Château Drusillon adorned her now. If Sylvestre never saw it again, it might impress M. Fablon.

Madame Blanchefleur and Coriot met in the hall, and Elise pounced.

"Madame, all is ready. For a little time there is silence."

"My good Elise," said Madame Blanchefleur, "whatever happens, show no surprise."

"We advance," said Coriot, "to the attack!"

Madame Blanchefleur, as she entered the drawing-room, was impressive. She subdued her charm to a more decisive quality, what might almost be called a hitting quality; her beauty commanded rather than appealed.

M. Fablon rose from a deep chair usually occupied by Bourdon, and Barbe rose from the music-stool. Madame Fablon did not rise; she was holding on her expansive lap the two *crétin* dogs, which yapped shrilly and furiously.

"In the absence of M. Bourdon," Fablon said, "it is my duty and—and my pleasure to welcome——" He paused and glanced helplessly at his wife.

"If you have forgotten the names, M. Fablon," said Madame Blanchefleur, "I can supply them. I am Madame Blanchefleur, and this is M. Jacques Coriot."

"My husband cannot remember a name for five minutes," said Madame Fablon.

"Are you fond of dogs, madame? These are darlings."

"They have charming voices," Coriot said gravely. Barbe glanced at him suspiciously. She was tall, fair, pale-eyed, and had a thin-lipped mouth that suggested infinite boredom.

"I think their voices are abominable," she said. Jacques moved over to the piano and almost whispered—

"So do I, mademoiselle, but one must say something. . . . You were singing when we arrived. You love music?"

"I hate it, but—one must do something!" Coriot smiled appreciatively; an understanding was established between them.

Fablon was a man who would hardly have fitted in anywhere; both mentally and physically he seemed to consist of inert protuberances. He was dull, self-satisfied, obtuse. Madame Fablon was more definitely vulgar. If her husband was content to be taken for what he was, it was necessary for her to proclaim that she was what she obviously wasn't. As for Barbe, she saw the shortcomings of her parents with distressing clearness, but had not sufficient humour to help them or herself.

"It is unfortunate," said Fablon, "that our hosts were called away so suddenly. One cannot entertain as one would wish in another's house."

"But how fortunate for you," said Madame Blanchefleur, "to have such hospitable neighbours!"

"That is true," said Madame Fablon. "But, madame, if you could only see the Château Guex!"

"I have seen it—from the outside."

"But the inside! I assure you it would contain the Château Drusillon twice over. And then the splendour of the decorations!" Barbe shuddered.

"Is it all so wonderful?" Coriot murmured to her.

"Oh, yes! Wonderful as a nightmare."

"Perhaps you are too critical."

"It is the fate of some people," she said, with a shrug, "always to be out of tune." Coriot felt sorry for Barbe.

"I have no doubt," Madame Blanchefleur said, "that the decorations of the Château Guex are splendid. I can imagine that splendour. But——" She paused. "But—what was that?" A low rumble of thunder, very far away, had reached her acute ears.

Madame Blanchefleur rose and stood erect, listening. Coriot caught her glance: it seemed to imply: "Follow!"

"What was it?" he said. "Could it be—"

"It is the signal—yes, the signal!"

"Then," said Jacques, "we must brace ourselves, remain calm, and send fear to the devil!"

"What is all this?" Fablon cried, one large hand fumbling with the other like a blind puppy with its unseen companion.

"What is all this, monsieur?" asked Madame Blanchefleur. "Have you never heard of the *revenant* of the Château Drusillon?" Fablon's mouth opened and closed. Then his lower jaw dropped as though his tremulous chin were weighted.

A nearer and more ominous rumble offended the dogs. Madame Fablon cowered over them.

"The *revenant* of the Château Drusillon!" Fablon's teeth clicked together, his face assumed a strange purplish pallor. "You speak of a signal. But surely that is no more than thunder?"

Madame Blanchefleur paid no heed whatever to the agitated Fablon. Her eyes, with dilated pupils, were fixed with extraordinary intensity on nothing.

"No doubt," said Coriot, "that was the signal."

"What day of the month is this?" Madame Blanchefleur tolled out the words like a malediction.

"The sixteenth," said Jacques.

"This is the eve of that strange reappearance. Now, at any moment. . . ." Madame Blanchefleur subsided into her chair and sat rigid, hands on knees. She was like a Buddha suddenly become woman. The oracular had revealed itself.

Coriot caught the flicker of an eyelid.

"If you are at all afraid, M. Fablon," he said, "it might be as well to hide yourself and your family from this *revenant*." Fablon was again fumbling with his hands.

"Is it," he gasped, "is it that the Bourdons are themselves afraid? Have they escaped and left us—my poor Hortense and Barbe, to endure this? . . . Heavens, only this morning a hare crossed my path and I saw a single magpie!"

A peal of thunder that might have been the crack of doom drowned Fablon's unsteady voice. When the reverberations had spent themselves, Madame Fablon's voice rose in a thin twitter.

"This is terrible! Let us go, my husband! Ghosts! I could never endure the thought of a ghost!" Fablon endeavoured to control himself.

"You may convey Barbe and yourself into safety, but how can I desert this household—I, who am a man?"

"As to that," said Jacques, "I will remain. I am profoundly interested in such matters; so also is Madame Blanchefleur."

"I have no fear," said Madame Blanchefleur, "but I take no credit to myself for that. One is as one is made."

"I confess to being superstitious," Fablon said.

"Then, monsieur, I beg you to stand upon no ceremony. M. Bourdon will hold you excused. It would distress him to know that any guest of his had suffered the smallest inconvenience."

"In that case, madame. . . ." Fablon rose. "Hortense, Barbe, prepare yourselves for immediate departure. My car is here," he added to Madame Blanchefleur, "and my daughter is an experienced driver. We will spend the night, perhaps, at Neuville, and proceed to Paris in the morning."

"An admirable plan," said Madame Blanchefleur.

Barbe lingered for a moment after her agitated parents had left the room.

"This *revenant*," she said to Jacques, "I do not believe in it. Nor do I believe in Madame Blanchefleur. I have watched her closely, and if she is not Mademoiselle Fadette, of the Théâtre Racine—well, I am not Barbe Fablon."

"You are right, my child," said Madame Blanchefleur. "But I beg you to keep the secret."

"Oh, you can trust me!" cried Barbe. "I am more anxious to leave the Château Drusillon than you to get us out of it. But nothing that I could say had any effect. I knew well enough that we had driven the Bourdons away." The girl was on the verge of tears. Madame Blanchefleur took Barbe's face between her hands and kissed the petulant, twitching lips.

"Little one," she said, "you have a great deal to learn about life. Be content to wait. Assert yourself a little more. Come to see me in Paris, before 'La Fadette' ceases to exist."

"Ceases to exist?"

"The life of that lady, I assure you, will be brief. But Madame Blanchefleur does not intend to die. . . . Now run away. Your mother is calling you."

Coriot closed the door after Barbe's departure, and stood looking at Madame Blanchefleur.

"You are an astounding person," he said. "The scene was short, but you never played anything with more effect."

"That is all very well," she said, "but where is Sylvestre? I cannot remain here, I will not. When those people have gone, I shall return to Paris. I will leave you to explain to the Bourdons how the Château Drusillon was recaptured. Go to them in the morning."

"You mean to return to Paris to-night—alone?"

"That is precisely what I mean."

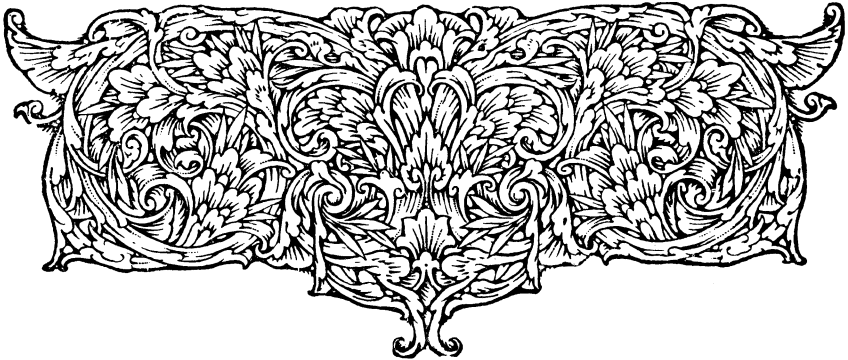
"Very well," said Jacques. "I will not argue with a woman in love, though, Heaven knows, I argue enough with Hélène. That parrot. . . ."

"Perhaps that bird is also a *revenant*," said Madame Blanchefleur.

Half an hour after the Fablons had departed, the blue-and-white car of Madame Blanchefleur was travelling rapidly along the road to Paris. The night had cleared after the storm; stars shone with, to Madame Blanchefleur, an exasperating and false placidity. The car flashed through Neuville without a pause. At the dark entrance to the Bois de Neuville the headlights of an approaching car twinkled, increased, became a blaze, and passed.

Madame Blanchefleur was too absorbed to observe, even if it had been possible, that Dr. Sylvestre Bourdon had been almost within touch of her hand.

A further story about Madame Blanchefleur will appear in the next number.



THE ANCIENT RIDING.

SCARRED acres, all a county wide,
 You are older than the men you breed;
 There is no old man, wrinkled as agèd willow,
 So old as you your furrows to bestride.

Scarred Riding, you are old indeed!
 Time was, dead centuries away,
 When dry land reared where now crumbles the billow,
 And on your stones were sea-slime and the weed.

Scarred Riding, lost in Northern grey,
 Man wounds you, but you guard his bones.
 You are old and stern, but ever a soft pillow
 For worn heads of your children come to clay.

ERIC CHILMAN.

AN OLD MAN'S GAME

By OWEN OLIVER

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

MY grandson and his wife talked about sending me away before Marie's marriage. They thought I was asleep in my chair; but I do not sleep as much as they think, only close my eyes. There is more to see within than without; for I am ninety-two.

"She's been trouble enough," Clara said. "We don't want any more from *him*."

"Bah!" said George. "You're always seeing bogies. He hardly realises that she is going to get married, or what marriage is. Besides, she won't say anything to worry 'Great-Grand.'"

Marie is considerate to me. God bless her!

"She won't talk to him about it of her own accord," Clara owned, "but he may notice that she goes about looking like a wet Sunday, and ask her what is the matter."

"And what if he does?" George growled. "He can't do anything; won't try to. He doesn't attach importance to things that happen nowadays. He says so himself."

I only mean things that happen to *me*. I know well enough that some have not yet outlived life's importance.

"He is in a position to give a good deal of trouble if he did," she protested. "He—I suppose he is asleep? I never feel sure about the old fox."

"He's as deaf as a post, anyway," my grandson said.

I am not so deaf as they think.

"As regards Marie," she muttered, "I'm not afraid of anything that he can do himself; but if she confided in him, and he advised her to stand out against our wishes——"

"Marie stand out!" George interrupted scornfully. "Did she ever 'stand out' all her life?"

"She's your child and mine, and his descendant. She must have a backbone somewhere. She made a good deal of opposition—for her—to the engagement, you know. With that fierce old man behind her—*he* has a backbone!"

"Had! He's scarcely enough left to sit up in his chair and play his old man's game of patience."

"I'm not so sure. Sometimes I think there's a bit of the old devil left. He can be stiff enough and stubborn enough on occasion, and tiresome enough. I don't know why we put up with him."

"You do!" my grandson swore, with an oath.

"He lets you handle his property while he lives here. Ye-es. He's contrived things so that you can only finger the interest, not the capital." (I have!) "He's not so innocent and harmless as you think, George. He's quite capable of calling you to account and putting the affairs in the hands of lawyers, if you offend him."

"Hang it, don't I know? You're arguing against yourself. That's just why I won't upset him by packing him off."

"You could send him to the seaside for a nice holiday, with Giles to look after him."

Giles is my man, and I pay him. He is a good servant, and good to me, but I know quite well that he is bribed to look after their interests.

"He won't go. He'll want to be at Marie's wedding. He always declared that he was going to dance his last dance at it. Ha, ha, ha!"

"So long as it's his last! Well, if you won't do it, you won't, George. I've warned you. I tell you again that, with that old man here, you'll never be safe until she's actually married, and Harmer has given

you back the mortgages. . . . The price of your child ! ”

“ Oh, don't start upon that again ! Needs must when the devil drives. She's your child, too, and you're sharing in the price. You know we'd be ruined if Harmer pressed me. ”

“ I know. I was your wife before I was Marie's mother. That's why I've helped drive the girl into it. I swear I wouldn't have done it to save myself from ruin. ”

“ Oh, she'll be all right. Harmer will make a great fuss over her, and give her all she wants. ”

“ All she wants ! Don't be a fool ! . . . Well, I've warned you. There's fire in the old ashes, and if it bursts out— ”

“ Poetic ! There's no need for it to burst out. You've only to watch that ' Old Fire ' gets no private talk with Marie. If he tries to, I *will* send him away, and chance the row ; but provided that he never speaks to her alone, he can't interfere. Let him sit in his chimney-corner and mess about with his patience cards. Nine-tenths of the time he'll forget that existence means anything more than his old man's game ! He doesn't realise that anyone's under sixty ! ”

But I do realise that. Nothing happens nowadays which matters much to me, but I know that considerable things still happen to young people, and that a girl's marriage is such to her. And I do not think that an old man's game is only with cards. It should be chiefly to help young people.

At ninety-two one cannot help people by doing things, only show them the way to help themselves. I knew I could only help Marie like that ; but I believed I could “ stiffen ” her enough if I could communicate with her without being found out and sent away ; and presently I saw a way to do it—a way with my old man's game of cards.

It was a trick that my little wife taught me when she was my little maid, seventy odd years ago. Seventy-one years ! We were just betrothed. They did not leave young people alone together very much in those days. In the evenings we had to sit with our elders, and could not say the foolish things we wished to say, only eye and sigh, until my Annabel found a way with the cards. Ah, she had a swift mind ! And a swift body. . . . These many years still . . .

“ The cards shall stand for letters, Ron,” she proposed. “ The black aces shall be ‘ a ’ and the black kings ‘ b,’ and so on, till we reach the black twos for ‘ m's,’ and the red aces shall be ‘ n's,’ and the red kings ‘ o's,’

and so on, till we come to the red threes of diamonds and hearts—but I should put hearts first, dear sir !—for ‘ y's.’ The red twos shall be more ‘ e's,’ because we shall have no need for ‘ z's ’ to call each other zanies ; and one wants so many ‘ e's.’ So we can write letters to each other that none but we can read. Shall I lay out a hand for you, Ron ? ”

I remember the hand which she laid out—9 of hearts—5 of diamonds—10 of spades—10 of clubs—8 of diamonds—7 of spades—2 of hearts—ace of spades—10 of hearts—8 of hearts.

That spelt “ sweetheart. ” You will see that it is so if you write out Annabel's alphabet.

I never told the trick to another for sixty years or more ; but when Marie was a child—and like Annabel even then—she was always running to me—in that also very like Annabel—and I was hard put to it to find ways of amusing her without romping, for which I had become rather old, being eighty. So, for a quiet game, I taught her the spelling with cards, and we kept it a solemn secret—which children love—between ourselves. We had not played the game since she was twelve, but I hoped that she would still remember it.

In the evening, when her mother and father sat reading their newspapers, and Marie pretending to read a book, but staring over it, and I at my little table by the fire with my packs of patience cards, I called her to me.

“ Come and see Great-Grand's new game of patience, sweetheart,” I said.

She sighed uninterestedly, but she came. She was always attentive to me. I dealt off one of the packs (which I had arranged beforehand).

J spades—K hearts—A diamonds—8 diamonds—2 clubs—A spades—10 hearts—10 diamonds—3 hearts—7 spades.

I put my hand like a barrier after the last card, to show that the message ended there.

“ Don't marry H. ” That was what it spelt.

She stared at the cards, frowned, started, began counting on her fingers. I shook my head warningly to stop her doing that openly, fearing that her parents might notice. So she pressed her fingers on the table instead. Annabel was like that, too—always added numbers one by one.

“ It seems a hopeless lot,” she remarked presently, and then I knew that she understood.

"You must move them into the right order," I said. "That is the game of patience, Marie—and of life—to set things right."

"I don't see how it can be done," she declared. "Everything is so unfavourable."

"It is a bad deal for a start," I conceded.

"Let's cheat and begin afresh."

I dealt from the second pack, which also I had arranged beforehand—

10 hearts—7 hearts—A diamonds—A spades—5 diamonds—A clubs—3 hearts—5 hearts—6 spades—

This hand doesn't count, remember. It is only a lesson."

I thought that her father was listening, so I played one of the numerous forms of patience correctly, explaining it to her, for a time. Then, when George appeared to be



"Her father looked up . . . 'Shall I come and have a try?' he asked."

8 diamonds—7 spades—J clubs—6 clubs—Q spades—4 clubs.

"Run away with Dick."

I knew that was the Christian name of her boy, though I had forgotten his surname for the moment.

She paused over this for a time, counting quietly with her fingers; shook her head.

"It doesn't seem possible," she said at last.

"Tut, tut!" I cried. "You watch me.

quite absorbed in his newspaper again, I reverted to spelling—a word or so at the time, with intervals of real play between.

"Will you . . . if I show . . . a way? . . ."

"It's quite easy really, Marie," I said aloud.

"Well, I don't seem as if I can do it," she asserted.

Her father looked up, stretched himself, and yawned.

"Shall I come and have a try?" he asked.

"No," she refused. "I want to do it

myself if I can. Great-Grand is going to show me. Now let me try."

She spread out all the cards, counted silently with her fingers before she picked out cards, and selected them one by one.

J spades—8 spades—K hearts—A hearts—10 spades—A spades—K spades—10 hearts—K diamonds—A clubs—J clubs.

"D. gone abroad," that spelt.

"I don't see how to get any further," she remarked.

"Of course you don't," I said. "That's wrong for a start. Well, I believe it is."

My grandson laughed and got up.

"Believe, eh?" he said. "How can you teach Marie if you don't *know* what's right and wrong?"

"I do know," I told him. "I keep

and sat down at the table. So I had to show him a variety of patience—I forget which it was—and only had the chance to spell out



"I dealt from the second pack, which also I had arranged beforehand. . . . 'Run away with Dick.'"

trying to get her to do the right thing, but she won't."

"Show me the game," he asked, and came

one more sentence to Marie before they said it was time for me to go to bed.

"I'll enquire."

While I was spelling that, I heard my grandson whispering to his wife. There was no need to worry about "the poor old devil," he said. "He's breaking up fast. He gets muddled even over his patience now; forgets to put red on black and black on red."

How I laughed to myself at that, as I lay in bed! Laughed so much that I became sad presently from the reaction.

"Not broken up yet," I told myself, "but broken-down in places—too many places. It is easy to *say* that I would enquire, but how am I going to *do* it? I can't trust their servants, or Giles. . . . Certainly not Giles. . . . The housekeeper I might. She's very fond of Marie. But I probably can't get a quiet word with her. Besides, I shall need someone outside the house to arrange with Marie's boy. An old man can still do things, but he must do them by deputy. Whom can I manage to see that would arrange this for me? . . . My lawyers? . . . No, they wouldn't do it; not if it weren't strictly legal, anyway. I want someone who'll be illegal for Marie, who'll consider her first, and second, and all the rest, and . . . Why, the doctor!"

Yes, the doctor would do it. I had long since guessed *his* secret. He was young enough (only sixty) to love the child, and not young enough to court her. He would go through fire and water for the little girl, if I was not mistaken in him. He would do a deal for me, too. I had lent him some of the money to buy his practice when he was a curly-headed lad. I decided to appeal to Dr. Jarvis for assistance. Then I went to sleep for a few hours.

In the morning I announced that I must go and see Dr. Jarvis. I had a touch of gout, I declared. They said they would 'phone to him to come and see me. I knew that if he came to the house they would stay with us all the time, or suspect something if I sent them away. So I pretended to be crotchety and old-fashioned (crotchety I may be, but old-fashioned I am not. A man is not antiquated because he does not fall in with every new fad).

"Telephone!" I stormed. "I will not have my case discussed over the telephone for everybody in the post office to hear. They think that gout comes from nothing but drink! It would soon be all over the village that I had been drinking. Sworn to secrecy! Don't tell *me*! Besides, you couldn't tell that it *was* the doctor you were

talking to; and there might be a mistake about what he said. I can never hear anyone properly on the cursed thing."

"That is because you are a little slow of hearing," my grandson's wife said. "But I'll send a note if you prefer." (She meant *say* that she'd sent a note. I saw her wink at George.)

"No, no," I refused. "I'm not going to tell you my symptoms. Women have no business to know about things inside people. The idea! There's no modesty in females nowadays. Look at the way they dress! Shameful! Besides, there's no need to waste ink and paper. I am quite capable of walking down to the doctor's—if I choose. If I don't choose, I shall ride."

"Very well," she said. "Take him in the motor, George."

"Take me!" I screamed. "Take me! I'm not a child! I won't go in the motor; I shall have a cab—a horse-cab, mind—and go by myself. I'm going to call on the doctor like one gentleman on another. . . . One gentleman on another. See?"

"You'd better humour him," she muttered to George; and then she whispered: "I'll 'phone and tell the doctor to pretend that he has gout, and give him something harmless."

They sent me in the dog-cart instead of getting a cab. I knew they did it to have an excuse to send Giles to drive it, and spy upon me, and report what I did and said. He followed me inside the doctor's gate, but I ordered him back.

"Giles," I said, "I am making a private call on the doctor."

"Yes, yes, sir," he said. "What I hear goes no further." (The liar!) "You see, you aren't quite so young as you were—not young enough to get about alone, and—"

I held up my hand.

"I am young enough to dismiss a servant who disobeys me, Giles," I said, "*just young enough for that!*"

He looked at me and went back. Oh, there's a little of the old man left in me—a little left!

The doctor said that he was very pleased to see me. As a matter of fact, I think the boy was. He began about my gout without waiting for me to mention it, said he knew just the medicine that would suit my constitution. I laughed.

"Never mind about the gout, Jarvis," I said. "I haven't got it. If I had, I wouldn't

take your confounded physic now, any more than I ever would. The medicine I want is for Marie."

He shot upright in his chair and put his hands on his knees.

"Marie?" he said. "Little Marie? . . . What's ailing her?"

"What always ails them at her age," I said, "and the remedy's the usual one. Dick—Dick— What the devil is the boy's name? Something like Johnson, but it isn't that."

"Jackson," he said. "Young Dick Jackson. So I always thought." He sighed. "But she's going to marry Harmer, a man nearly as old as I—balder. The second banns were read last Sunday. Do you mean to say you didn't know she was marrying him?"

"She isn't," I said, "if I can stop it. Twenty years ago, Jarvis—aye, less than that—I'd have taken the child away, knocked anyone down who tried to stop me. By Heaven, I would have! Now—my boy, a man hates to own it, but I'm too old. . . . Still, with the help of a man who was Marie's friend—Marie's good friend, who wanted to see her happy with her boy—I may take you for that, eh?"

He nodded, paced the room.

"You may take me for that," he said. "But the girl's under her father's and mother's thumbs. I doubt if you can give her courage to resist them."

"No," I agreed; "just enough to run away from them, perhaps. But they've told her that the boy's abroad."

"They've told her a lie, then," he said.

"I thought so! I *thought* so. Where is he?"

"In London, I believe. Quite broken up over the affair, his people tell me. Marie wrote and gave him up, you know—wouldn't see him."

"Well, she's eating her little heart out for him. We can't have Marie's boy broken up. You've got to fetch him here; arrange with him to run off with her; have the licence ready and all that; some good woman—how about his married sister?—to chaperon her till they're man and wife. You fetch him and arrange all that."

He grunted; pulled at his moustache. "I dare say I could arrange all that," he said; "but can you arrange *her* part, and get her to carry it out?"

"Yes," I said, "if. . . . Do you know, Jarvis, sometimes I muddle things up nowadays; mean to do something and do

something else. Awkward and annoying! But *when* I'm all right, I'm *all* right! Can't you give me something to take, to buck me up just at the emergencies? The times that matter to Annabel—I mean Marie. You see, she is like my wife was. Sometimes I say one name when I mean the other. . . . Yes, the child's very like Annabel. I expect that's why I'm taking all this trouble about her. Can you give me something of the kind, Jarvis?"

"I might. You'll run a bit of a risk in taking it, old friend."

"Oh, risk! Hang that! I can run risks all right. It's doing things where I fail. So *you* do all you can—arrange to see me and tell me what she's to do. You manage that for me."

"I'll manage that. I'll call to take you for a run; say that you've promised me to give motors a fair trial. Then we can talk alone. . . . The trouble is, how are you to communicate the arrangements to Marie? They're likely to be spying on her and on you. Do they let her be alone with you?"

"No," I said, "they don't, but I can tell her; right under their noses, Jarvis." I rubbed my hands. "I am playing an old man's game. I shall tell her with my patience cards."

He looked at me pityingly then, and I laughed.

"You think I am doddering," I said, "but I'm not, Jarvis. Listen. I'll tell you."

I told him how Marie and I could spell messages to each other with the patience cards. He laughed and kept patting me on the shoulder.

"An old man's game," he said, "eh? My dear friend, *you* aren't old! You'll never be old. Not too old to play for the young people."

"That," I said, "is the old man's game, Jarvis. His own doesn't matter. Mine hasn't since Annabel went, and I was younger than you are then. Ah, fifty-four was too young to die! She always said that she'd rather go when she lost her looks, but she hadn't lost them—not a bit of it. See her in this picture? I always carry it. She was fifty when it was taken, Jarvis. . . . A beautiful woman. . . . Such a saucy way. . . . Ah, they wouldn't have kept *her* from *me*! . . . A fine face, isn't it, Jarvis? A fine face?"

"Yes. . . . You think you can communicate *sufficiently* with Marie?"

"I must. What you must do, you can. All my life I've said that. . . . I'm not what I

was, but the clockwork still runs. I'll do it."

"God strengthen you, my dear old friend! Now mark this in your mind. If I find him, I'll send you a box of pills; not unless. You've got that?"

"Yes. I shan't take them. I'm still young enough to hate medicine muck. Ha, ha, ha!"

"There will be nothing in them, anyway!" he laughed. "If we're arranging for him to come and fetch her, I'll send *two* boxes. Got that?" I nodded. "If I write asking you to come and lunch with me, that will mean that he's fetching her the day before the lunch. *The day before, mind.* You'll remember that?"

"I'll remember it," I said. "The day before. Yes, yes."

"But probably I shan't write, only come and fetch you for a motor run, and give you the exact particulars then. See?"

"I see," I said. "Now help me to the dog-cart, Jarvis. I'll pretend to be very tired and stupid, and you tell them that I'm breaking up, breaking up. Ha, ha! . . . Oh, those things I'm to have to buck me up if I feel muddled! Give me them."

"Um-m-m! . . . Well, it's for Marie. *Our* little Marie, eh? *I'm* getting an old chap. . . Here you are. Just swallow one if there is special need to pull yourself together. Don't touch them if you can help it, because you'll feel rotten afterwards. . . Ready? Take my arm and make out that you're tired—collapsed!"

As a matter of fact, I *was* very tired. When I arrived home I slept right up till dinner-time, and then I had dinner in my own room; but afterwards I crawled down to the dining-room.

"I must have my game of cards," I quavered (I need not have quavered so much!). "It is the one thing an old man can do. You come and watch, Marie. Learn something from your old great-grandfather while he lives with you. That mayn't be for long—not for long!"

She came and sat by the little table, and I spelt to her—in short pieces, because there are only two of each letter in a pack—and she spelt answers.

"Dick in London. . . Fetching him."

"Afraid."

"Have things ready to go."

"When?"

"Soon."

"Afraid."

"Love casts out fear."

"I'll try." Then she spelt. "They watch me."

"When easiest?"

"Daylight. . . Might creep ou—"

(She hadn't another "t" for "out," but I nodded that I understood.)

"Why, Marie," her mother said, "you are becoming quite interested in patience!"

"Yes," she said, "I am really learning it. You must teach me again to-morrow, Great-Grand!"

She laughed and gave me a kiss, and then she went to bed. I heard her mother whisper to her father while I waited for Giles to fetch me—

"She seems quite to have made up her mind to it now. And the old man doesn't dream that she has any objection. He isn't so dangerous as I thought—quite doddering!"

Ha, ha!

The next morning the doctor sent me two boxes of pills. I made a great fuss about taking any, and made Marie bribe me by the promise to play patience in the morning. I thought that, as their suspicions were dulled, I might get a quiet word with her then; but her mother remained with us. So we had to spell.

"Dick's coming."

"When?"

"Can't say yet."

"There's only a week."

"Doctor's fixing up."

"God bless him."

We stopped spelling after that, as Marie's mother seemed to be watching us rather closely.

"It's a funny game of patience when you pick out the cards," she remarked.

I pretended to get in a rage, and cried out that I wouldn't play any more if she accused me of cheating, and swept the cards on to the floor.

"Your poor master is failing fast," I heard her whisper to Giles. "He even cheats himself at cards, and that is not like him!"

Even Clara had to do me that much justice.

In the afternoon the doctor called for me in his motor. He said that a little open air would be so good for me, if I could overcome my prejudice against cars. I pretended to make a great fuss about going, but went at last. I really do not like cars—they feel so confusing. I made him stop it in a lane while he talked to me.

"I can't think," I protested, "with the road and the hedges and everything jumping at me."

"I have seen Dick," he reported, when we were at a standstill under a big tree. "Of course he is willing to run off with Marie—more than willing—but he'd rather take her openly. His first suggestion was that he should come to the house and, supported by you and me, say that he wanted to marry her. She is just of age. If she chooses to go away with him, they can't stop her."

"He's a fool," I snapped. "So are you,

it was my opinion. He said if it was yours also he would run away with her. He has procured a special licence, anyhow. What time and how will be easiest? How about to-morrow early?"

"Four o'clock to-morrow morning," I said; "the sooner the better. The longer she waits, the less nerve she will have! She shall come by the side gate into Bell Lane. I will tell her to. . . Goodness knows how I'm going to tell her 'to-morrow.' There are three 'o's' in that, and only two in a pack. Oh, well, I must do a 'patience'



"His mouth stopped open, but no sound came."

if you listened to that. She's obeyed her parents all her life, and she wouldn't disobey them now, especially not *now*, with the marriage due next Tuesday. It *might* have been done that way months ago, before she was engaged to Harmer, though I doubt it."

"And now she wouldn't?"

"Now she wouldn't," I said emphatically. "Annabel would have—ah, *she* had a spirit! I had to mind my p's and q's sometimes, bless her!—but Marie wouldn't—couldn't, Jarvis. It isn't in her."

"Then that's that," he said. "I told him

with two packs. . . . He will take her straight off? And marry her that morning?"

Jarvis nodded.

"His sister, Mrs. Innis, and I are going with them," he said. "I'm driving them in my car. Driving Marie to her wedding." He gulped. "God bless her. . . . Old friend, you mustn't fail."

"I mustn't fail," I agreed. "I'll get her out if I fight the way—if I fight the way. Afterwards *he's* got to fight, if they should find out and follow. He can keep her once he has her. They can't take her from him,

any more than he could tear her from them. She'll just hold to whomever has her. She'll be all right—if I play *my* game right, my old man's game. God help me! When I worry I get muddled. It's my age, Jarvis—my age. You think one of those capsules will buck me up, Jarvis?"

"Yes. Don't take it if you can do without it. You've only got to tell her what to do, you know. Then she must manage to do it for herself. You go to bed and sleep."

I laughed.

"When I play a game I *play* the game," I told him, "even if I'm an old man. She'll come. I shall watch and see that she does. See that she does, Jarvis."

"Yes," he said, "but it will be a strain on you—a great strain. . . . It's a bit of a strain on me, you know. I suppose you understand?"

"God bless you, Jarvis," I said. "I understand. . . . You . . . Some things in life I *don't* understand. I don't. . . . Why we grow older in the body than in the heart. . . . Well, you'll stand the strain for *her*. How Annabel will chuckle if she can look down and see me! She was only like Marie in looks. There was more—more woman in her—a *naughtier* Marie. Pray Heaven she keeps her naughtiness! Well, I shall soon know. This is my last hand, I think, and then I go to Annabel with my winnings and losings. We always shared."

"This time," he said, "it must be a win!"

It was a win, but I felt the struggle more than I expected. It was a hard game to play that night. George took an unfortunate interest in our patience games. I had to play before him with one pack which I had arranged, and to sort it again, and could only signal to Marie between times. Fortunately someone called to see him for a few minutes, and I spelt fast then. My signals were these:

"To-night."

"Four in morning."

"Side gate."

"Dick. Motor."

"In lane."

"Four morning. Lane."

"Don't fail."

"Four. In lane."

"Understand me?"

I managed to spell the inquiry while her father was arguing about the play in another hand. Marie picked up the spare

pack and seemed to play about with it aimlessly; presently slipped down.

3 hearts—2 hearts—9 hearts. *Yes.*

"No, no!" her mother cried. "You'll never learn poker patience if that's what you're trying, Marie. Put the nine *under* the three. You want to get a royal sequence with the hearts." She altered the cards and laid down two more—the ace and king of hearts; in our alphabet they spell *No*. The room seemed to swim round me then. I thought for the moment that Clara knew our trick, and was spelling. However, the queen and knave came next (*p-q*), and she said that the cards weren't shuffled, and shuffled them. So I concluded that it was only coincidence; but I could see that Marie was disturbed and trembling, and feared that she might be frightened from her purpose.

"You've spoilt Marie's hand," I said. "Let her have another, and begin with the same cards."

"Yes," Marie said. "I'll pick them out. Then mother can shuffle the rest."

She laid down 3 hearts—2 hearts—9 hearts, putting the 9 underneath the 3 this time. I knew that she meant me to understand that she stuck to her determination to go.

"Bravo, sweetheart!" I said. "That's the spirit for your game. When you make up your mind, stick to it."

"That," said her mother, "is what I tell her! So we agree for once, Great-Grand!"

I went to bed at ten, but I could not sleep. At three I got up and dressed. At a quarter to four I crept out in the passage, listened at Marie's door, and heard her moving. At five to four I went out again. Before I went out this time I swallowed one of the doctor's capsules, and I put my revolver in my pocket. I did not mean anyone to keep Marie from going to her happiness.

It was well that I took the revolver, for just as Marie came out from her door Giles came out of his little room at the end of the passage. He must have heard her moving. She staggered—almost dropped the bag which she was carrying. He opened his mouth to speak, then saw me.

His mouth stopped open, but no sound came, for I held my revolver at his breast.

"One sound and I shall shoot you," I said quietly, very quietly. A man of my sort—the sort that I *was*—does not bluster.

"Go, child. I will look after *him*. There

shall be no alarm before you are well away. Kiss me. I can't take my eye from him. God bless you! Now go."

I heard her faint steps go down the passage, and the faint sounds die out. "Come to my room, Giles. Don't try any games. If you startled me— My hand is unsteady, you know. The revolver might go off—might go off! No, walk backwards. That's it. Sit on the chair."

"Sir—"

"Hold your tongue! You shall speak after I have heard them go."

"But—"

"Silence!"

Presently I heard the engine start, then the motor. When the engine ceased, I put the revolver in my pocket.

"Now, Giles," I said, "if you think it advisable to rouse the house, it doesn't much matter. They will never catch Miss Marie. If they do, it won't matter. They'll never get her from Mr.—Mr.— Hang it, I'm growing old! I forget names—forget names!"

I suppose it was reaction. I broke down suddenly. Giles begged me "not to excite myself"; helped me to undress and get to bed; made me a cup of tea on the ring burner.

"What's done can't be undone, sir," he said. "I shan't tell 'em, if you don't wish it. The fact is, sir, I'm a poor man, and— You'll remember that I stand in with you."

"You remember that, Giles," I said, "and we shall get on all right; and perhaps, when my will is read, you won't be sorry for humouring me. You're a good servant, and I know I'm a trying old man. *But don't take me for older than I am.*"

"No, sir," he promised. "In your young days you must have been the very devil! Lor', what a stir there'll be in the morning! You keep quiet and know nothing about it."

That was my idea, for at my time of life you do not want a fuss. I pretended that I did not properly understand about Marie.

"Gone, has she?" I said. "Ah, going to get married or something, I expect! They do—they do! And just when she was beginning to take an interest in patience! Very unfortunate, very unfortunate! Well,

well, I must play by myself, I suppose. Give me the cards."

"I believe," Clara stormed, "they are the only thing in life which interests you. Don't you realise what has happened? The disgrace to the family? Do you understand that Marie was to have been married next week, and that four days before the wedding she has run away with somebody else? What do you say to that?"

"Changed her mind," I said. "Must have changed her mind. Where's the pack with the lion-backs, Clara? I don't see that."

She muttered something about "hopeless old fool."

"There they are," she snapped. "Now you can play your confounded—"

"Oh, let him alone, Clara!" George growled.

"Your old fool's game," she finished.

I sat back in my chair and looked at her.

"An old man's game, Clara," I said, "is to help the young. The cards are sometimes useful for that."

"Good Heavens!" cried George. He is quicker-witted than she. "You old devil, what have you done?"

"You'll find out," I said; "and if you try me too far, you'll find out what I'll do!"

We stared fiercely at each other—were still staring when a servant brought in a telegram for me.

2 spades—A spades—10 hearts—10 diamonds—6 clubs—2 hearts—J clubs—2 clubs—A clubs—10 hearts—6 spades—2 diamonds.

"My game of patience was worked out all right," I told them. "The last hand I shall play that matters, I expect. I shan't tell you the play. It was a secret between your grandmother and myself and Marie. But I'll tell you what the telegram means. *Married. Marie!* If I live long enough, I'll teach Marie's child my old man's game!"

But I do not wish to stay here so long as all that. I want to go and play with Annabel. I seem lately to feel that she is very near. Sometimes I stop in the middle of my old man's game to reach my hand across the table . . . and some day she will take it.



THE PROPERTY OF A LADY

By PHILIPPA SOUTHCOMBE

ILLUSTRATED BY GILBERT HOLIDAY

COMMANDER HETHERINGTON, R.N., retired, dropped his eyeglass in his coffee-cup and his morning paper on the fox-terrier beside his chair, and got to the French window of the morning-room in two strides. As he stepped out, a neat semicircular sod of turf met him on the bridge of the nose. It proceeded from the spot where a black horse, with humped-up back and clamped-in tail, was jazzing at the edge of the lawn. The solemn and heated small boy who was his unwilling partner touched an imaginary cap—the real one was lying in a bed of Paul Crampel geraniums—as Hetherington appeared, and remarked breathlessly that the “harse was a fair terror he was, sure.”

Hetherington glanced regretfully at the black-dinted turf and the semicircular patterns punched out of the edge by the restless feet, and refrained from direct comment. He was particularly proud of the flawless rectitude of his turf-edgings.

“He’s called the Sky-rocket, sir,” explained the partner, politely anxious to set Hetherington at his ease, “and he’ll lep—lor’ bless you— Come out of it, will you?”—this last change of tone being due to a violent movement on the part of his evidently most aptly christened charge, who seemed anxious to justify his name. There was an interval during which several geranium plants were somewhat rudely transplanted to an adjacent carnation bed, and the cause of all the trouble, the fox-terrier, retired with a subdued air to the morning-room window. His master, who could not but admire the bulldog tenacity with which the small boy had adhered to his end of the rope halter, demanded the meaning of things in no uncertain voice.

The boy drew his sleeve across his damp forehead and looked surprised. Finally he said: “Ain’t your name Hetherington?”

“Yes. But——”

“Ain’t this house The Moorin’s?”

“Yes.”

“Well, that’s right, then. I’ve got it wrote down. Miss Mary she made me write it down myself, ’cos she said then if I lost the paper I’d be more likely to remember it. But I didn’t lose it. Look!”

And he held out for Hetherington’s inspection a grubby scrap of paper, that the latter might read his name and address inscribed in somewhat tipsy capital letters.

There was a moment of poignant silence. The Sky-rocket had stopped jazzing suddenly and stood with uplifted head, blowing long soft breaths through distended nostrils. Hetherington stared at him—at his raking lines and satiny coat, his proud head and his clean legs, with that admiration almost amounting to pride that such a living picture has power to evoke, quite irrespective of ownership.

The Sky-rocket’s escort, unerringly interpreting that look, smiled. He had a distinctly engaging smile; but Hetherington, while appreciating the fact with an unconscious relaxation of his own countenance, yet retained sufficient strength of mind to demand what it all meant. The escort looked at him squarely, as man to man.

“Miss Mary, she said to come,” he explained briefly.

“But who the dev—I mean, I don’t know Miss Mary. And if I did, why should she send me a horse?”

“She thought you’d look after him.”

“Oh!” said Hetherington. The beautiful

simplicity of it had him at a disadvantage. He tried another tack. "What's your name, sonny?"

"Clarence."

"Clarence what?"

"Jus' Clarence."

"Where d'you come from?"

"Over to Miss Mary's."

"Where's that?"

"A long way."

"But which way?"

"Up along."

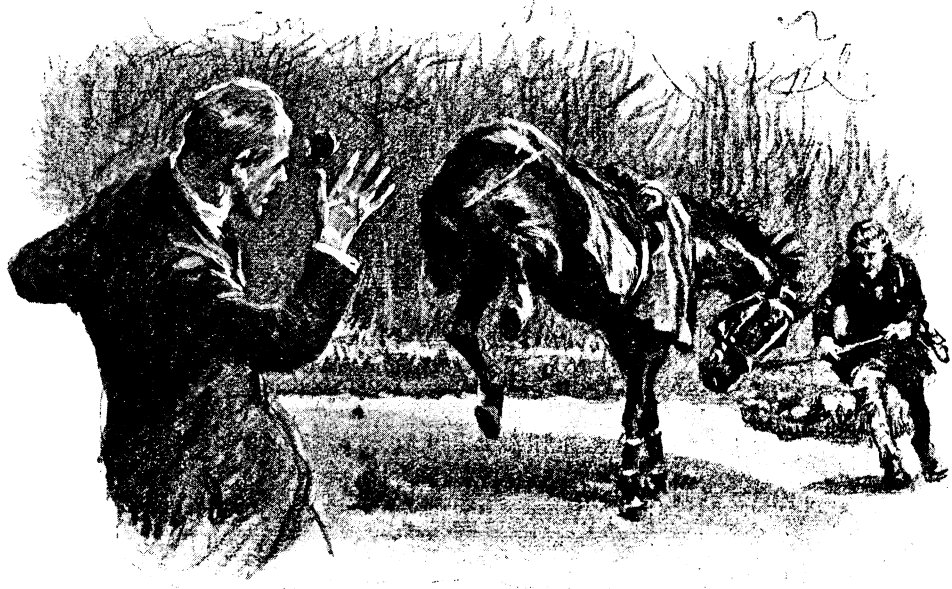
Hetherington drew a deep breath.

"Where's up along?"

The escort's eyes, wide, grey and seraphic, did not waver from his. "Up over."

Commander Hetherington, R.N., retired—moments memorable for various measures of greatness, thrill, or poignancy—but never had he experienced anything quite like this. In all fairness he could pursue that particular line of inquiry no further.

He gave a rueful laugh that didn't hold a great deal of amusement, and, reserving his private opinion of Miss Mary, said firmly: "Now, look here, Clarence, you just go round to the kitchen and ask cook to give you some breakfast—as much as you like—and then take the Sky-rocket home to Miss Mary, and tell her, with my compliments, that the only pets I like are canary birds."



"A black horse, with humped-up back and clamped-in tail, was jazzing at the edge of the lawn."

There was a long pause. Then Hetherington said grimly: "There's no doubt about it, Clarence, you'd be wonderful in a witness-box. But all this time I'm no wiser than I was to start with—and that brute's ruined the lawn."

The escort turned to regard the works of his charge with pride rather than regret. He reached up a small grubby paw and patted the Sky-rocket consolingly on the neck.

"Clarence!"

"Yes, sir?"

"Where—does—Miss Mary—live?"

"Miss Mary said not to tell, sir."

There had been moments in the life of

But Clarence, accepting the joke with a polite smile, stood his ground. "Miss Mary said to stay here," he observed.

Thus Hetherington accepted the inevitable, Clarence, and the Sky-rocket.

The situation was as piquant as it was absurd. Strive as he might, Hetherington could connect "Miss Mary" with no neighbour of his acquaintance. True, he had only been at "The Moorings" for six months, and the place was a particularly remote one in an altogether sparsely populated corner of England, and he did not hunt. Nevertheless, he had a superficial acquaintance with most of his neighbours within a good many miles, and only the

other day had met a goodly number of feminine ones at a flower show of some local importance.

For it must be pointed out that Hetherington, at forty, was in danger of finding all the interests he required in geraniums, peaches, and the occasional use of the trim yawl moored in the fishing harbour two miles away.

His peaches, his vegetable marrows, and his sweet peas had taken first prizes at the show in question, and had afforded the simple heart of Commander Hetherington a gentle thrill thereby, which was all, it appeared, that he now asked of life.

An hour after his arrival saw the Sky-rocket installed in the big stable, where he had for sole companion the sedate and elderly cob that sometimes paced to the station in the four-wheeled dogcart, and sometimes—more rarely—carried Hetherington on peaceful voyages round his home farm. It was there, apparently, that Clarence elected to remain. He would, he explained, sleep in the loft; he had promised Miss Mary never to leave the Sky-rocket.

Hetherington, with his hands in his pockets, stood in his own stable and looked from the boy to the horse and back again. Somehow he had got to find out the absurd mystery without unduly infringing Clarence's loyalty to the unknown Miss Mary.

Had Clarence any idea why Miss Mary had sent the Sky-rocket to him rather than to anyone else?

Clarence had. His opinion was more frank than flattering. He explained gravely that it was partly because "The Moorings" was furthest away, partly because there was stabling, "and partly because Miss Mary knew you wasn't anything of a rider, and wouldn't be likely to try an' back the Sky-rocket."

Hetherington received the explanation in silence. He was conscious of a sudden, unreasoning desire to confront Miss Mary and prove to her that her unflattering description of his horsemanship was all wrong. It was a sort of cave-man instinct, entirely alien to the peacefully retired-and-settled-down heart of Commander Hetherington, forty-odd, and old enough to know better.

"Miss Mary, she rides him." Unwittingly Clarence set spurs to that new desire. "But she's a wonder, she is! An' a girl, too," he added instructively.

The immediate upshot of which conversation was the saddling of the elderly cob.

From the highest point above "The

Moorings" Hetherington gazed forth upon the land rather as if he expected the solution of the mystery to materialise out of the wide view of sky and moorland. "Miss Mary" had been right. Far as the eye could reach, you could count but a couple of moorland farms as the sum total of human habitation. Four miles southward, hidden by a great heathery hill, was a tiny fishing hamlet; eight miles in the opposite direction a small country town, in the neighbourhood of which were the few country houses sheltering the aforesaid neighbours.

Until now Hetherington had found the prospect absolutely satisfactory; now, for the first time, he felt that a jacksnipe, a curlew, and a stray donkey were insufficient company. They could not, you see, enlighten him on the subject of "Miss Mary."

By the time he had reached the white ribbon of moorland road he had also reached the point of wondering what Miss Mary was like. And in spite—or perhaps because—of this, he kept the cob going at a pace which surprised that elderly animal as much as did the unprecedented length of his master's morning ride.

They were, in fact, six miles from home when they met the man who, all unconsciously, was a spoke in the wheel of Hetherington's fate. Hetherington recognised him as the owner of an adjacent farm, and a prominent supporter of all local sporting events, and was not surprised when his greeting heralded a request for a subscription for some locally arranged steeplechases to be held on a selected course some few miles away.

"Quite a small affair, sir, but we've got some rare good horses entered—some from the R—Hunt. It should be a good meeting, and if it's a success, we hopes to make it an annual affair. You've always been generous to us, sir, so we hoped, though not huntin' yourself—" He paused tactfully and patted the cob's neck. "Nice little harse this, sir."

The wisdom, prudence, common-sense, level-headedness, and kindred virtues which Hetherington should surely have acquired, fell from him like a garment.

"I'll give you five guineas," he said calmly, "and whatever the entrance fee is—if the date for entry is still open—I have a horse I'd be glad to enter. You might let me have all particulars. I shall be riding myself."

The man recovered himself on the verge of looking aghast, and hurriedly stammered

his thanks. He looked at Peter, the cob, who was peacefully tearing mouthfuls of heather, coughed, hesitated, looked at Peter's rider, and finally murmured apologetically that of course the Commander quite understood that each of the three open races was a steeplechase? The cob now—there was a stiffish bank and hurdle. . .

Hetherington laughed. "I hardly thought of entering Peter. I don't think he's ever jumped a brick in his life." (He refrained from adding that neither had he.) "No, this one is a—a first-rate lepper. He's called the Dove." Certainly Hetherington's gift of invention and sense of humour were advancing hand in hand. "No, he's not mine. I'm just riding him. He's—the property of a lady."

* * * *

There followed the strangest and most strenuous ten days of Hetherington's life—days devoted to the acquiring of many bruises and to uneasy dreams featuring the appearance of "Miss Mary" to claim Clarence and the Sky-rocket.

But the dreams were not fulfilled, and the strange situation continued. Hetherington's gardener, hurrying to his master with the dire news that the thrushes had got under the netting of his show-destined loganberries, was horrified at the latter's callous indifference. Hetherington at that moment was standing, in shirt and riding-breeches and a black eye, on the verandah of "The Moorings," while Clarence solemnly walked the Sky-rocket up and down in the sun.

Even the black eye could not conceal the exaltation of Hetherington's countenance, an exaltation attributable to the fact that he had sat the Sky-rocket's eighteenth jump that morning without appreciably shifting in the saddle. And even Clarence had been impressed, although it took a lot to impress Clarence. His precise opinion of the events of those ten days was not revealed, but then their purport had not been confided to him.

For Hetherington had decided that not until the eleventh hour should Clarence know of the Sky-rocket's destined performance; if Clarence could keep such persistent silence anent *his* part in the affair, such a course was surely justifiable.

And "Miss Mary" should see—which showed that the cave-man instinct still prevailed.

* * * *

The day came. That there might be no possible hitch in the proceedings, Hetherington personally escorted Clarence and the

Sky-rocket from "The Moorings" to the course. Clarence, enlightened, had merely opened his mouth and shut it again. And beyond an injunction to keep the horse as much as possible in the background, Hetherington had issued no instructions at all, which was surely a compliment to Clarence.

In the paddock the Sky-rocket, hooded and rugged, became the Dove, the property of a lady, awaiting unchallenged the saddling bell of the third and most important race on the card. He suffered Hetherington to mount with unusual amenity, and cantered down to the post with only the hint of a buck. There were but five horses in the field, mostly owned and ridden by members of a neighbouring hunt. Hetherington caught the edge of a score of curious glances, and saw the starter, a tall, grey-haired military man, who three weeks ago had complimented him on his vegetable marrows, stare at him incredulously and then glance at another man, young and sulkily good-looking, who was standing close to the rope. He heard the latter speak angrily:

"Mary, what the deuce is the meaning of it? That's the Sky-rocket—the Sky-rocket! Do you hear? And you told me you wouldn't let him run on any consideration—when I wanted to ride him for you. You told me he'd gone to the vet. Who—who the dickens is that fellow?"

"That," said a very quiet and charming voice, "is Commander Hetherington. He's going to win."

The Sky-rocket's jockey turned his head. He saw the man who had spoken, and then the girl he addressed—a slim figure in a white serge suit and a wide brown straw hat, beneath the brim of which two big hazel eyes looked out of a small oval face. Hetherington gravely lifted his cap, and saw the face in question, which had been decidedly pale, suddenly flood with rose.

The flag fell. They had got away in a bunch, a slight fall in the ground sending them thundering down to the first obstacle, a comparatively easy bank. Early as it was, Hetherington became aware that the Sky-rocket was going to take things into his own direction. With scarcely a perceptible pause he had flung the bank behind him, and was overhauling the favourite, a raking chestnut mare with the "jumping" hindquarters of an Irish-bred hunter.

Obviously all Hetherington could do was to try to stick on, try to steady the Sky-rocket, and try to keep him from going wide. The horse required no urging, but the chestnut,

ridden scientifically, was going to take a lot of beating. Dimly Hetherington was aware of that as the Sky-rocket's heels just flicked the fourth hurdle; dimly also he was aware that the crowd had begun to shout. The wind sang in his ears, but somehow it could not drown the echo of a very clear and charming voice: "That's Commander Hetherington. He's going to win."

head; as it was, he lost a stirrup. But with his muscles well in play, and every nerve keyed to endeavour, he felt the checked pace in time. Instinctively his cane fell. The crowd yelled, then it roared. The Sky-rocket had won by a neck.

Fifty yards beyond the winning-post the horse dropped from a blown canter to a trot. With an effort Hetherington squared



"'You told me you wouldn't let him run on any consideration—when I wanted to ride him for you. . . . Who the dickens is that fellow?'"

The Sky-rocket rushed at the last fence, then, with a sudden fit of that perversity that was apt to be his undoing, and of which Hetherington had had no experience, he checked for a swerve.

Possibly, had they been practising in the paddock at "The Moorings," Hetherington would have sailed ignominiously over his

his shoulders. As he mechanically wheeled his mount, he saw a slim, white-clad figure, the owner, hurrying to lead the winner in.

A moment later the three of them were sharing congratulations. Hetherington, lean, tanned, perceptibly hardened by the foregoing ten days, had as yet seen only the top of the brown straw hat and the slim

ungloved fingers holding the Sky-rocket's bridle. In the thrill of endeavour and success he had forgotten the ridiculous mystery that attached to the whole affair: now it returned with redoubled force. Turning to speak to someone before dismounting, he did not notice the girl's relinquishing of the bridle, but when he had swung rather stiffly to his feet, he found her vanished, and Clarence at his elbow instead.

tion on the subject. It was only when the boy possessed himself of the Sky-rocket's bridle that he realised, with a sudden shock, that the horse that had grown to be his very good pal was not his at all. In the ordinary course of events—if the word "ordinary" could possibly be applied to the situation—this would be the end—the end of something that in a few weeks' time, when he had returned once more to



"‘That,’ said a very quiet and charming voice, ‘is Commander Hetherington. He’s going to win.’ The Sky-rocket’s jockey turned his head.”

And Clarence’s form of congratulation was startlingly original. He said: “I’d ever so much rather Miss Mary married you than that other fellow, sure.”

Hetherington looked pardonably startled. But Clarence vouchsafed no further informa-

his geraniums and peaches, he would come to believe had been a dream.

The Sky-rocket rubbed his head against Hetherington’s shoulder, then obediently accompanied Clarence paddockwards, leaving Hetherington to the inevitable bombard-

ment of chaff, congratulation, and curiosity. But when at last he had, by strategy and by main force, secured solitude once more, he went determinedly in search of Clarence and the Sky-rocket.

He found the latter in the furthest corner of the paddock, attended by a slim person in a white serge suit and a brown straw hat.

She said hurriedly: "I've sent Clarence to eat buns in the refreshment tent. I—I've never even thanked you. It was splendid. And—and I owe you an explanation, don't I?"

Hetherington replied gravely that he rather thought she did.

"I—you see—I didn't know what to do. Captain Fenwick wanted to ride the Sky-rocket, and I didn't want him to. He was awfully persistent, and, besides, he wanted to make conditions in the event of his winning." She paused. "I wouldn't consent to that, but he persisted, so one day, when something had to be done, I said I'd sent the Sky-rocket away to—to a vet. It wasn't true. I'd sent him to you. You see, I thought he'd be safe there, and I knew I could trust Clarence, and—and——"

"And you knew that, not being anything of a rider, I wasn't likely to try and back the Sky-rocket," he finished for her ruefully.

"Oh!" She flushed pink. "I—you see, I didn't really know you. I mean I'd only seen you once, at the spring flower show over at Craychester. Someone told me who you were, and you'd got first prize with polyanthuses. We live right over the hills—twelve miles from your house. I think Clarence was awfully good to find the way. He's only a little fellow——"

Hetherington was looking down at her oddly.

"And I'm only an old fool, but I think I shall find it, too," he said thoughtfully. "Miss Mary, you don't know what I owe you and the Sky-rocket. Since I retired,

three years ago—well, you wouldn't understand." He paused. "Getting slack, and all that."

Miss Mary, who had been looking straight ahead across the purple of the heather, turned to face him squarely. Her hazel eyes, black-lashed, were very serious and very lovely.

"You're not so awfully old at all," she said. "Clarence thinks you're a brick, and so do I. You know, he must have had a tremendous lot of faith in you—he never even let me know you were riding the Sky-rocket. And when I ran across him in the paddock, just before the race—well, of course I was frightfully angry—and he just said, 'Don't you take on, miss. He's goin' to win, he is.' And then I saw you, and I knew he was right. Captain Fenwick is awfully cross," she went on frankly. "I believe he's trying to lodge an objection against the Sky-rocket because he was entered under another name. But even if he succeeds, it won't really make any difference, except that Clarence will want to murder him. Clarence never did like him," she added in explanation.

To which Hetherington replied absently that he'd rather gathered that.

"He even said he'd rather——"

But there he stopped abruptly, aware that fifteen minutes or so may not universally be considered a long acquaintanceship. Perhaps Miss Mary was good at guessing, or perhaps her experience of Clarence finished Hetherington's sentence for her more or less correctly. At any rate, the countenance that she had once more turned heatherwards became carnation pink. Then, suddenly, and with a charming candour, she looked up at him squarely, holding out her hand.

"I agree with Clarence—in lots of things," she said.

From which remark Hetherington derived a quite absurd amount of pleasure.



CURIOUS EXPERIENCES IN GOLF

STRANGE AND UNEXPECTED INCIDENTS OF THE GAME

By H. H. HILTON

I AM not going to the length of comparing the game of golf to the psychology of woman, but there is a possibility of a certain similarity in that one never quite knows what may happen in dealing with either subject. I have seen many things of an unexpected nature happen in connection with the game, some of them humorous, and some of them humorous with a certain element of the tragic included.

Many years ago I went down to play in a match on the links of the Seaton Carew Club. At a certain hole, about the sixth, on the course I had occasion to play a short mashie pitch on to the green. There was a hefty-looking bullock standing on the green. As he was in the way, I strongly suggested to him that he should move. But he paid not the slightest attention to me. So I proceeded to play, and, to my surprise, he watched the ball all the way from the clubhouse, and then proceeded to amble after it and promptly chew it. I was quick enough to make him drop it before he had done too much damage. It afterwards turned out that he had waited on that particular putting green right through the morning rounds, and not a couple had passed without his having had some manner of meal off the ball of one player or another. It may have been vice, or he may have been an epicure, but it was most amusing to wait for the couples coming in one after another, and in every instance there was the same story to tell: "Look what an infernal cow did to my ball at the sixth!"—and many of the balls produced did not look like golf balls at all; they might have been anything. Our bovine friend accomplished his fell purpose very completely.

Most of us know the story of the ball which lodged in the nostril of the old horse

which used to pull the mower at Mitcham. A golfer played a full wooden club shot which pitched very near to the old gentleman, and the ball seemed to disappear into space. Eventually the horse condescended to blow it out from his nose. I was rather sceptical of the veracity of this story until shortly afterwards I was playing at Mitcham, and Mr. Mallaby-Deeley explained that it was absolutely correct, and, to confirm his word, took a ball and placed it in the nostril of his old horse, and in due course of time it was deposited on Mother Earth again, and I could see how it had happened. It had found its unaccustomed resting-place on the bound and not on the pitch.

A short time ago a player hit a drive which landed into a cow's ear, and it apparently took some time to dislodge the ball. But one of the most humorous things I have ever seen was as follows: a man hit a tee shot which was bound for trouble, but some fifty yards from the tee it struck a sheep fair on the skull, and the ball ricocheted off and finished some two hundred yards down the centre of the course. One may ask: "How did the sheep fare?" Well, he simply shook his head and went on eating his lunch.

I was once staying in Rusack's Hotel at St. Andrews. As many no doubt know, it is situated about two-thirds of the way up on the right of the line to the last hole. We were a party of eight, and had a sitting-room on the third floor facing the links. It was a desperately wet day, and in consequence we had recourse to playing cards to while away the time. Six of us were sitting round a table, and suddenly there was a terrible rattle and commotion. A ball had come through the open window and pitched plumb in the centre of the table. It careered round the room, and eventually

came to rest on the floor. It had not hit anybody and had not broken anything, which was almost a miracle. One of the members of the party looked out of the window and saw a golfer coming up with an inquiring, expectant look on his face, and my friend remarked: "Is this your ball?" And the only answer he received was: "Aye." They say that the Scotch are a phlegmatic race, and I can believe it after that remark.

Another incident of a somewhat similar character was accomplished by Mr. Stanley Froy at a championship meeting at Prestwick, as he hit a ball from the first teeing ground, and it pitched through the open window of one of the carriages of a passing train. As there was no complaint, one must assume that nobody was hurt.

I have seen a player in the Amateur Championship at St. Andrews strike his second shot to the last hole with a wooden club—strike it very hard and very high—and have the mortification of witnessing the ball carried away by a high wind clean over the houses on the right of the line; and there is a story put down to Mr. Guy Ellis, of his having accomplished a similar feat, and that he proceeded to find his way back by one of the narrow passages which run between the road and the links, and that he eventually holed out.

Many, no doubt, remember the incident in the 1904 'Varsity match at Woking, when Mr. Hugh Alison placed his second shot on the top of the club house, and then proceeded to find a ladder and play the ball from the top of the roof. Most golfers would have left the ball there and given up the hole; but Mr. Alison is nothing if not a bit of a wag, and just loves a situation such as this.

I think that the majority of golfers have at one time read of the famous brown rushes on the Westward Ho! course. They are long and they are strong, and they grow in clumps. At the end of each individual rush is a spear-head spike which has the firm, solid consistency of steel. Balls occasionally meet these rushes end on, and the rush remains there—and, moreover, the ball. When I first heard these stories of golf balls remaining impaled on the end of these rushes, I must acknowledge that I was almost more than sceptical in regard to the probability of such a thing being possible; and even when I was shown a sample of a piece of rush with a ball dangling at the end, I was still inclined to be a doubter. The fact that the ball *was* impaled upon the rush-

end was undeniable, but I could not help thinking that the "exhibit" had been faked in some way or other. But there came a day when I saw a ball struck from the eleventh teeing ground, and when we came up to the spot where the ball was presumed to have come to rest, there it was dangling down, firmly impaled upon the spike of a six-foot rush. Thereafter this doubting Thomas doubted no more. I have seen a player attempt to play over a barbed wire fence. He failed in his contract in regard to the "over" part. One strand of wire suddenly appeared as if it had come to life, as it hopped about like one possessed. The reason for this unseemly behaviour? Well, the ball was impaled on one of the barbs, and it required a good deal of physical force to remove it from that barb.

Occasionally one witnesses the sight of two balls meeting in mid-air. It is an occurrence which must have happened many, many times, and invariably when two players are driving in opposite directions. But quite recently I was playing in a three-ball match. I played a long approach from the right-hand side of the course, and one of the other players played an approach from the left-hand side. Neither of us was aware that the other was playing. I candidly acknowledge that I hooked my approach most abominably, and it was bound for anywhere—everywhere but the putting green.

Suddenly it went off at an acute angle away to the right, and finished within a yard or two of the hole, and I quickly arrived at the conclusion that for some reason or other the gods of fortune had been working overtime in my favour. The conclusion was a very correct one, as it turned out that my ball in its flight had struck the other ball, and the impact had caused my ball to travel directly towards the hole—a direction which, by the way, was not its original direction. The other player's ball was, so to speak, struck dead, as it just dropped to the ground lifeless. He said that, except for the untimely interference of my ball, the result would have been a very happy and successful one. I could afford to grant him this measure of consolation, as the result of the argument in the air ended in H. H. H. having a putt for a three, whilst the injured one was struggling for a four, and, incidentally, failed to achieve this desired end.

A golf ball will occasionally lodge in a pocket. There is an absolutely authentic



Photo by]

H. H. HILTON DRIVING.

[Aljuri.

story of a golfer playing on the Queen's Park course at Bournemouth, who, in attempting to play from a bad lie at the fourth hole, smote the ball fiercely on the top. It jumped up in the air and disappeared. He had not the slightest idea where it had gone to, but eventually it was retrieved from

his own coat-pocket. The most interesting incident of this character which I remember was at a championship meeting at Hoylake. The ninth hole is called the "Punchbowl," and to the man approaching, it is as blind as blind can be. One is not expected to play an approach to this hole until the players

are to be seen leaving the green for the succeeding teeing ground. Well, one day an impetuous golfer saw one of the players wending his way to the teeing ground. So he let fly, and played what he considered was a superb approach; but when he arrived on the green there was not a sign of the ball. So he said to the couple preceding him: "Did you see a ball drop on the green?" And they said "No." He said: "Surely you must have done." Then a slight flick of the memory resulted in one of the players putting his hand into his breast handkerchief-pocket, and he pulled out the missing ball. The explanation was that he had been walking off the green, and felt a tug in the region of this pocket which he could not understand. He looked at the pocket and saw nothing unusual; but the query from the man who had played the shot suddenly made him think: "Can it possibly have been his ball?" And, surely enough, it was. The approach was played against a strong wind. The ball consequently fell vertically, and the handkerchief he had in his pocket served to soften or deaden the shock of the impact.

In the very old days at Hoylake the course used to criss-cross all over the place. Playing to one hole you would find yourself crossing another green. I was once playing on a temporary green to the twelfth hole. My opponent, who was standing hatless on the edge of the green, suddenly let out a very hearty oath. I looked round quickly, and saw a ball dancing round his head. It was a comical sight. The ball had dropped on his head, jumped up in the air and dropped down on his head again, and it turned out that the striker was no less illustrious a person than Mr. Horace Hutchinson, and the anger of the hatless one quickly disappeared when he realised the personality of the individual who had unconsciously perpetrated this rather grim joke.

I once saw a player performing on a links where volunteers were in the habit of drilling. They happened on this occasion to be forming fours and other figures, well off the recognised line of play, but not sufficiently far to place them without the danger zone where my particular friend was playing. He was a long hitter and a recog-

nised "slicer," and he hit a shot which answered to both these qualifications. Result: The ball struck one volunteer on the head and ricocheted from there on to the cheek of another volunteer, and there was consequently not a little temporary disorganisation in the serried ranks, particularly when the C.O. turned round with an angry frown and said: "Who threw that stone?" The feat cost my friend a matter of seven-and-sixpence. He appeased the first injured one with half-a-crown, but the second of the injured, realising a promising market, demanded five shillings and, moreover, got it.

There have been many cases recorded where dogs, crows, and other four-legged and two-legged marauders have run away with golf balls, but one of the most humorous incidents I have ever heard of was in a game played on an Irish links. A player struck his ball to a blind one-shot hole, and his opponent said: "That is a beauty! It must be almost in the hole." When they came up to the green, there was no ball in sight, and they could not understand it. Eventually they saw a kitten having a great time playing with some unseen object. On investigation they found that it was the ball they were looking for. The kitten had rolled the ball off the green and was playing with it in the rough.

At Ilkley a player struck his tee shot to a short hole. There was a man on the edge of the green scything grass. The ball landed on the edge of the blade of the scythe. The ball was practically cut in two, but one portion was a little larger than the other, and the larger portion finished up quite close to the hole. But one could go on enumerating these unexpected and untoward incidents in connection with the game of golf for pages and pages. One thing, however, I wish finally to mention, and that is that when I defeated Fred Herreshoff in the final of the American Championship at the thirty-seventh hole, at Apawanis, my approach to that final hole did not drop on a rock, for which fact I am devoutly thankful. It dropped on a nice kindly piece of earth which was stationed between two rocks, and this piece of earth did all that was necessary for my welfare.



"‘Take it,’ he said, and sat down quietly, helping himself to a cigarette."

THE SAVING IMPULSE

By CHERRY VEHEYNE

ILLUSTRATED BY E. G. OAKDALE

"I'VE heard that's all off now."

"What is?" Lester Harthill swung round sharply in his chair.

"Lucy Raffbury and Harold Milnes—their engagement is off."

"Why?"

"Don't know. You know Milnes lost his father a fortnight ago?"

"Yes." Harthill sank back again in his chair, and the other fell into conversation with someone else. Harthill sent clouds of smoke from his nostrils, and his eyes glowed dark in his pale face. "Who told you?" he asked abruptly, after a pause of some minutes, so that his informant looked up in surprise. "About the engagement, I mean," he added.

"Her brother. Why?"

"Nothing."

Harthill rose and left the smoking-room.

There was a curious air of disturbance about his customarily cold and somewhat cynical face, a hint of hot blood racing beneath its smooth pallor. He shook himself impatiently from the hands of the man who assisted him into his overcoat, took his hat and ran down the steps of the club, and passed out into the May night. He had a card for the dance at Lady Raffbury's, but had not intended going. Of late he had found it unwise to come in contact with Lucy Raffbury; now he hailed the first taxi he met, and found its pace all too slow.

The room was crowded when he entered, and he halted in the doorway, nodding now and then to those he knew. Lady Raffbury caught sight of him and, with smiling recognition, began to make her way towards him, he moving forward to meet her. Nobody knew much about Harthill, excepting that

he was the last of the Luff-Harthills of Hampshire, and obviously freed from the poverty which had been theirs for the last two generations. He moved in the best sets, wore clothes that were tailored triumphs, and said the wrong thing in the right way oftener than most dared to do. Nobody knew how he had retrieved the family fortune, but he was not the man any would question or think of questioning on such a point. The Harthills were notoriously poor, but they were solidly established and beyond reproach.

"I thought you were not coming," smiled Lady Rafbury. "Lucy is over there. Will you come and speak to her?"

Lady Rafbury was sorry for her daughter, and understood her impatience with those who were so speedily endeavouring to replace the man to whom she had been engaged, and she thought she might be glad to talk to Lester Harthill, for that he was numbered amongst her daughter's admirers she did not dream, and she knew Lucy liked him and enjoyed his society. She was pleased to see the smile on Lucy's shadowed face as she greeted him, and after a few words Lady Rafbury left them together.

"Is it true that you are not going to marry Milnes?" he asked, and she turned surprised eyes upon him. "Is it?" he repeated. His voice was low, yet she became aware of the throbbing excitement underlying his calm.

"Yes, it is true," she answered, and turned her face away.

"Why?" She drew her brows together, with an expression half displeasure, half questioning protest. "I have come to find out," he said, and she moved round in her chair to look at him.

"Mr. Harthill——" she began, and he interrupted her.

"You are the only woman in the world—in my world, and a man's world is bigger than the universe, for it comprises heaven and hell as well. I know you loved Milnes, and that you are the sort of woman to love well. Had you been different, I should have stopped at nothing to supplant him; but you were not the woman to change, and it was your happiness even before my own." He gave a short laugh, though his face was white. "It's unlike me to put myself second," he admitted, "but then it's unlike me to love."

The wanness had left Lucy's face; it was lovely again in the astonishment his words aroused. She would as soon have looked

for such a declaration from a marble statue as from Lester Harthill.

"Why, I—I never thought——" she stammered.

"Tell me why you have parted from him," he said. "Is it final?" Her momentary forgetfulness passed, and she sank back into her misery.

"Yes," she returned, her voice hopeless and bitter with pain.

"Why is it?" he asked, with a gasp. It seemed too good to be true.

"Now that Sir Richard is dead, there is not a penny for Harold, not a single penny, and you know he was never brought up to do anything. So—so we can't marry. I would, but he will not. He does not pretend it is for my sake. He admits he should find it intolerable to see me in perpetual poverty borne for his sake, and which he could not relieve. Of course, he said I should find it intolerable, too, but he knew I would not believe that."

"And you have no hope? He has utterly gone out of your life?"

"Too utterly!" she whispered, with a catch in her throat. His hand closed on hers like a vice, but the loose tunic of her dress hid the movement.

"Then you are free—Lucy!" His voice seemed to fail him for a moment. "You will not live all your life alone. Later, when you have forgotten it a little——" His eyes were unnaturally dark, and his fingers burned; she pitied him, although it seemed an offence for any to dream of occupying her lover's place.

"I shall never forget," she said, "and I shall live my life alone."

"You say that now. In a little while——"

"I shall say it just the same in ten years' time," she broke in, and the steadiness of her tone arrested him. He fell silent, and regarded her steadfastly. "I shall always love him, always wait for him. There is no chance of him making anything but the barest living, because he is quite untrained and has no special talents, but I shall hope for miracles, hope always, for without that—I could not live," she added, low.

"You think it now. You fancy life over with his going."

"I don't think: I know. That is how I love."

Her eyes looked straightly into his, and, because he himself loved deeply, he recognised the depth of her love, and knew that she spoke the truth. She was not the woman to change, nor to accept any love

she could not return, to make a mean best of life.

He withdrew his hand from hers, and frowned at the polished floor as he schooled himself to calmness; she could see a tiny muscle in his cheek working furiously.

"Why has his father left him penniless?" he queried abruptly, after a while.

"It appears that Sir Richard was not his father."

"Not?"

"No, it seems Harold was an adopted son. Sir Richard did make a will, leaving him everything, but it has disappeared, so Sir Richard's brothers, who were not on speaking terms with him, have claimed everything."

"How has it disappeared?"

"The house was broken into only a week before Sir Richard died, whilst he lay ill, and the will must have been taken out of the safe along with other valuable papers and a heap of paper money. The solicitors have a copy of the will, but that is no good." Harthill's lips had fallen slightly apart.

"Why, of course," he exclaimed, and added: "I heard of the robbery."

"Sir Richard was too ill to be told of it, or he might have thought of the will and made another. If only the thieves had left that!"

He smiled dryly.

"Their visits are usually hurried," he observed. "It would scarcely do for them to examine everything on the spot."

"I suppose not," she assented.

Before he left the house he sought out Lucy again and drew her aside.

"Say it again," he whispered, "as before your God. You will always love him—you will never put another in his place?"

"Never, never!"

"And you are—very upset at parting with him?"

Tears brimmed over on to her cheeks, her lips quivered piteously; she bent her head and fled through the still crowded room to where she could weep in peace.

II.

AN hour later, in his own luxurious flat, Harthill unlocked a safe and took out bundles of papers that lay there in disorder.

"And madness in any case," he muttered, "to leave things undestroyed. I've become careless."

He broke open several seals and covers, scanned the contents, and tore them into narrow strips before he dropped them into a glowing fire, for the night was chill. What-

ever their value to their owners, they could be of none to him, and he burned them without hesitation.

"Ah, here it is! Her surmise is right, then." He glanced down Sir Richard Milnes's last will.

"... all I possess to Harold Edgar Ward, known as my son, Harold Milnes. . . ."

All he possessed, which was the price of Lucy Raffbury's happiness.

Harthill put the will aside, and went on burning papers until all of an incriminating nature was destroyed, the ash broken up, and the fire replenished with fresh fuel. Then he sat very still, and a silver clock ticked away a silent hour.

Milnes had been brought up to believe himself the only son of a rich man, and he had small prospect of ever earning more than a bare subsistence, especially as he was not the man to press friendship into his service or accept anything by favour. In the sphere to which he belonged, in the life to which he was accustomed, he would make Lucy Raffbury one of the happiest women in the world. With his adopted father's will unfound, he would go out of her life and leave her to unending misery.

Harthill thought of that as he sat before the wide hearth with the will in his hands. Three silver chimes rang out, and some coal fell into the heart of the fire and raised a dancing blaze. His face had taken on a hue that aged him and put dark secrets in the shadows round his eyes, and a grim world-knowledge on his lips.

"What folly!" he cried, and sprang up. He set his fingers on the parchment to tear it, and paused. "Her happiness, her complete happiness! Yes, he would make her happy. And he'll never take her to poverty, and she. . . ." A vision of her swimming eyes and trembling mouth shot across his mind. "She'll keep her word, God help her! She'll never love another; she'll never let another love her. She's like that."

He stood staring before him, and again dropped into his chair. He sat still and stony-eyed, and each minute set a further look of age on his drawn face. Through his mind went the luxury of his life, the untarnished name he bore. He was proud to arrogance, and the right to hold his head high and speak the words he chose to speak unchallenged was breath of life to him.

"Yet only she need know," he muttered, and winced.

Yes, he could send the will anonymously

to Milnes, and only Lucy Rafbury would guess by whom it had been sent—and stolen. Only she! But that would mean continual torture for him, if he remained in the life where he would constantly be meeting her; it would mean a dull fire burning eternally in his shamed cheeks; and eyes that dared not meet the eyes of others. It would also mean a return to poverty, for he did not think she would allow her friends and others to be robbed solely because the thief had loved and served herself. He could picture her telling him he must cease, or she must denounce him. Distressed she would be, but he did not think she would put her own feelings before her sense of right, her respect for law and order. If he sent the will back, he must drop out of his old life for ever.

There was New York. He had friends there, and he would be far removed from Lucy Rafbury, and the noise of his exploits would not be likely to reach her. He might purchase her happiness at no bigger price than her knowledge of what he was, exile from his own particular world, the constant sting of her scorn. After all, a reasonable price.

He rose and crossed to a desk, took out a large envelope, and enclosed the will in it. This he sealed and placed on the mantelpiece. Then he took up the telephone book to ascertain Milnes's address.

He would leave London at once, posting the will before he . . . He lifted his head, his features growing sharp, as the flat bell rang loudly. He glanced at the clock—ten minutes to four. Again the bell buzzed angrily. He put the telephone book aside, and lit a cigarette as he heard his man shuffling along to the door. A second or two later an insignificant little man bustled in unannounced, backed by two plain-clothes men. He handed a card to Harthill.

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Harthill," he apologised. "Of course we know it's an absurd mistake, but a housebreaker just brought in has made extraordinary allegations against you, and we're bound to act on the supposition that they may be true. He says we shall find ample proof of his statements here, providing you have no warning, and, if you don't mind, we'll make instant examination. Here's our warrant."

"Really!" Harthill's expression was a perfect blend of amazed disgust and whimsical amusement. "Oh, well, here are my keys." He tossed them across and resumed his cigarette, chatting now and

again with the two who searched. The third was examining the other rooms.

"Nothing, of course," at length announced the fussy little man, whose card gave his name as Hayes. "We must apologise for— Ah, would you mind opening that?" He was pointing to the sealed envelope on the mantelpiece. "I am obliged to be thorough. The man was afraid of you being warned by the fellow who escaped when he was taken. Said he went there against his judgment to-night, and it might be guessed he would implicate you two who had overruled him."

"That is a private letter to a friend of mine," returned Harthill, frowning. "I should think this joke has gone far enough."

"Sorry, but it's an important-looking letter which might be anything. If you'll oblige me by a glance. It's often the small things that count. And, of course, our search over, you can make what noise you like about the annoyance you've been subjected to."

"That will scarcely make it more palatable," retorted Harthill, and his brain was whirling. Which was it to be—her happiness or his own safety? Her happiness and his public disgrace and ruin, or his safety and her wrecked life?

He had stirred the fire whilst he waited for the conclusion of the search, and it was burning briskly. It would be easy to fling the will there into the red heart and hold it down forcibly until it was destroyed, and afterwards, with no other shred of evidence against him, to defend his action by swearing the document implicated a woman, and indignantly denying their right to violate it. In face of his ready acquiescence to their examination of his private effects and his still unsullied record, he must be believed.

Hayes took down the envelope and inserted his finger underneath the flap. Self-preservation leapt to life. With a bound, Harthill sprang up, snatched it from him, and tore it across. With one hand he held back the astonished little man, whilst the other crushed the torn will and drew back to fling it into the glowing fire.

"I tell you it concerns a woman," he cried hotly—"a woman whose name I will not have . . ."

He broke off, his hand arrested in the act of throwing.

Lucy Rafbury's eyes behind a curtain of tears, her mouth trembling, her voice saying—



“‘And you have no hope? He has utterly gone out of your life?’ ‘Too utterly!’ she whispered, with a catch in her throat.”

"That is how I love!"

That is how she loved, and he—how did he love?

He suddenly ceased restraining Hayes, and, instead, handed him the torn package.

"Take it," he said, and sat down quietly, helping himself to a cigarette, whilst the overwhelmed Hayes recognised the enormity of the find and the sensation it heralded.

* * * * *

"Harold," whispered Lucy Rafbury, on the evening of the day on which Lester Harthill had been sentenced to ten years penal servitude, "they said he could have

destroyed it—nearly did so and then—gave it up."

"Yes, and he had been going to post it to me. He voluntarily bought our happiness. I don't doubt that."

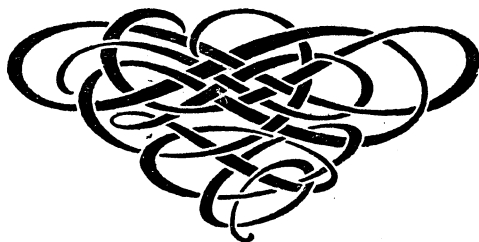
"Then, Harold——"

"Yes, of course," he said, answering her unspoken appeal, "when he is released, anything he will allow me to do for him, I will."

"He would not now, but after the weary years . . ."

"Yes, poor devil. I expect his spirit will be broken by then."

Lucy bent her head, her tears falling unrebuked on his shoulder.



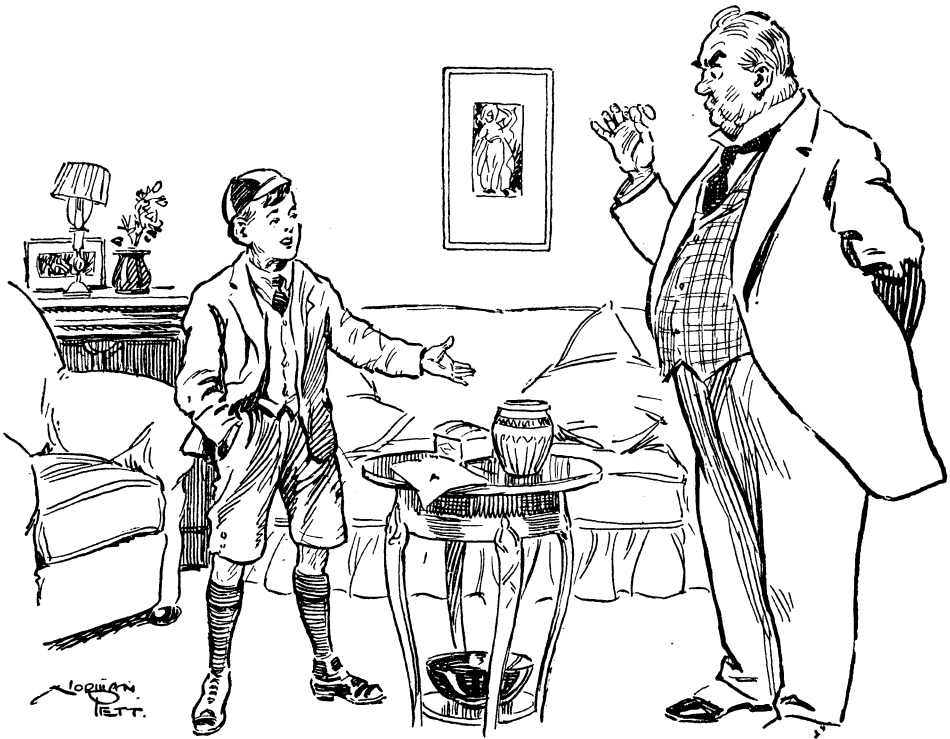
WHY?

WHY did you smile as if you knew
The thought I fain would hide awhile
In jealous secret even from you?
Why did you smile?

Why did you sigh as if you guessed
The dreams that richly bloomed to die
In tragic silence, unconfessed?
Why did you sigh?

Why did you turn, our brief farewell
Spoken, and pause as if to learn
Something my lips had yet to tell?
Why did you turn?

DOROTHY ROGERS.



A TACTFUL ARRANGEMENT.

SON AND HEIR (home for half term): The Head wasn't a bit keen on my coming, but I told him I'd get you to enter for the Old Boys' paper chase, so he put your name down, and here I am.

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

THE PASSING OF THE ROLY-POLY.

By Ada Leonora Harris.

"DARLING!" said Vera, looking at me affectionately across the breakfast table. The honeymoon was on its last legs, according to the calendar, but there was no cloud as yet upon the matrimonial sky.

"Dearest!" I replied.

"What do you think I am going to do?"

"I can't imagine, pet. Something awfully nice, I'm sure."

She kissed her hand to me. I responded.

"I'm going to make a roly-poly—a black-currant jam roly-poly—to go with the cold beef and salad."

"No? How ripping! But do you know how?"

"It will be my first," she admitted, with an almost semi-maternal air.

"Well, then, as you are going to be busy, and as I go back to Town to-morrow, I shall mend that hole in the fence, so that that beast of a next-door dog can't get through and scratch up the grass seed I've just sown."

About an hour later she called me from the kitchen door.

I had been smoking a pipe and looking at the fence. So I stopped work and obeyed the call.

"There it is," she said, drawing my attention to a little, oblong object swathed in calico and girded with much string.

I had never seen a roly-poly *en déshabillé* before, and mentioned the fact.

"I believe the poor thing's blushing," I added, and received a rap from the rolling-pin.

"Now," said Vera, after a little more by-play, "the saucepan's boiling. I shall pop the pudding in, and leave you to look after it while I run out and do some errands. It's early closing day, and we're out of butter."

"But I don't know anything about boiling a——"

"Darling, all you have to do is to turn the gas down if it seems to be boiling too fast."

"Well, don't blame me if—— Oh, all right, all right! I'll watch over that first-born roly-poly of yours like a guardian angel."

"There's a little dab of flour on your left cheek. Let me kiss it and make it well."

She departed shopwards. I went back to the fence, smoked another pipe or so, and had knocked in about two nails when I hammered my thumb very thoroughly.

When I had finished commiserating myself and blaming the hammer, I remembered the pudding.

The saucepan was boiling madly, and the pudding seemed to be trying to kick the lid off.

I turned down the gas, and went back to the garden and potted about.

The clock struck twelve. Vera had been gone an hour and a half. I'd better have another look at the pudding.

probably cry and make me feel a brute. Was there any way out of it?

What was that?

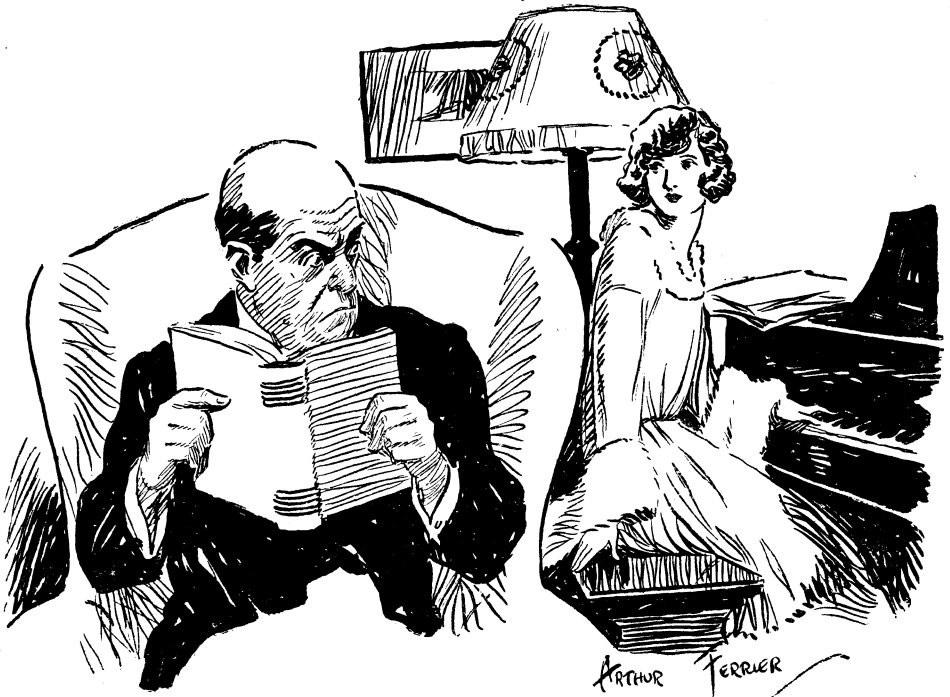
A knock at the kitchen door, and a voice: "Say, guv'nor, could yer 'elp a pore chap? Outer work—wife and fambly. Nothink ter eat since brekfust—I mean since brekfust yestydy."

When Vera returned, her first question was: "How's the pudding?"

"Fine," I replied, avoiding her eye. "And I've mended the fence and——"

But she went to the saucepan and lifted the lid. I squirmed.

"Why, where is it?" she gasped. "It isn't here. What's become of it?"



A MISSING LINK.

"THERE, father, I played it all the way through without the music."

"H'm! I thought something was lacking."

On the threshold I was met by an awful smell of gas.

Fool that I was! I must have turned the gas too low, and a puff of wind had probably blown it out. The place reeked. After I had aired it a bit, I took off the lid of the saucepan, which had stopped boiling, and fished up the pudding with a fork.

Even I could see that it looked far from well. It had shrunk and had a sort of a don't-hit-me look, and, as I held it up by the scruff of its neck, grimy, black-currant tears oozed from it.

What on earth would Vera say? She'd

"Must have boiled out, or boiled away." I racked my brains. "I remember once my mother made a Christmas pudding, and there was a hole in the cloth, and it boiled out and was lost."

"But—but there isn't even the cloth!" she exclaimed. "There's nothing but the water."

"Then it's been stolen," I declared firmly. "While I was hard at work at that fence, someone must have slipped in and sneaked it. I only wish I'd caught him at——"

"Say, guv'nor"—again that voice—"I've 'ad a go at that pudden o' yours, and it's give me indigestion somethink crool. I've got a



A HOSTESS with charming indiscrimination might introduce you to a miniature flapper,



With whom your six feet of mauliness appeared supremely ridiculous.



Or maybe your lot would be cast around, or half around, a human clinging Zeppelin,



Or opposite that apprehensive, stand-offish sparrow who never lets you get a grip of her at all.



Perhaps even worse was the intense vamp who poured out her whole psychic soul to you.



So that's why we who really dance still bring the special partner, and treat the hostess with contumely (you all know what that means).

A QUESTION OF PARTNERSHIP.

wife an' fambly, an' I can't erfford to tamper with me 'ealth."

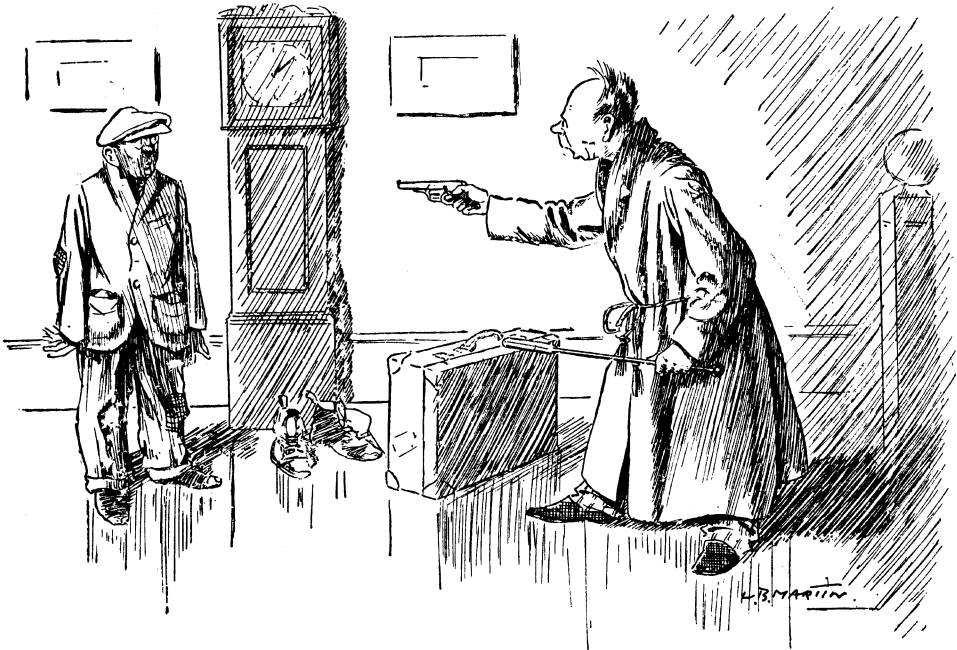
Oh, yes, she forgave me at last, but——

"Roly-poly pudding, sir? Black-currant jam, very good, sir," said the waiter at the dining rooms I patronise, a day or two later.

"No, thank you," I replied.



"DURING the wet weather, when digging is impossible," says a gardening journal, "there is always plenty of work to do in the potting-shed." If you want to make sure of getting a little rest occasionally, it is evidently the best thing not to have a potting-shed.



THE EXPLANATION.

EXCITED HOUSEHOLDER: Now, then, what's in this bag?

BURGLAR (lost for a good excuse): Oh—er—ah—er—I—er—thought it would be—er—long job, so I—er—brought a few sandwiches.

"We are having a lot of trouble with baby just now; he simply won't go to sleep at night."

"Well, why not get your husband to tell him one of his golf stories?"



EXCITED CUSTOMER: I come in and speak ze French, and you not understand! Vat for you put in ze window French he is spoke here?

CALM SHOPMAN: Well, you've been speaking it here, haven't you?

A DIVISION OF LABOUR.

(Tears, according to the latest scientific discovery, contain an ingredient that is fatal to any microbe.)

My Molly, I know you are itching

To tidy this study of mine;

I notice your fingers are twitching

To deal it a strafing condign;

Full often you give me a bitter

Reminder that I am a man

Of letters (so-called) not of litter,

And outline your straightening plan.

But up till to-day I've protested,

Though not, as you think, on the ground

That, as long as it went unmolested,

I knew where my things could be found,

But rather because of the number
Of microbes among the *débris*;
To harry them out of their slumber
I feared would be fatal to me.

But now you've my gracious permission
To start on a glorious clear.
No germ can retain its position
In face of the curative tear.
We'll ban the bacilli with weeping,
Together we'll make our attack;
You busily scrubbing and sweeping,
And I giving baby a smack.

Theta.



The Bridal Gem

There is no gem that is more becoming or tasteful for a Bride and her Bridesmaids or Guests than the pearl.

The most admired necklets and ornaments at many of the smartest weddings, worn by the most distinguished and beautiful women of the Court and Society, praised by all who see them and described in the press as real pearls, are actually

Ciro Pearls

though the fact is known only to the wearers. In lustre, texture, and weight there is no detectable difference between *Ciro Pearls* and the natural pearl, or they would not be worn so generally at important social functions under the critical scrutiny of the best judges of jewels.

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City Branch: 44, Cheapside, E.C.2.

THE QUEST AND ITS ENDING.

A Modern Fairy Tale.

THE Modern Princess sighed so deeply that the Venetian blind of her bower tapped gently against the lattice, and the policeman on duty in the street outside thought that it was even the cook in the basement summoning him to some dainty sample of her skill. Whereby he was only brought to disappointment and a participation in the Princess's sorrow.

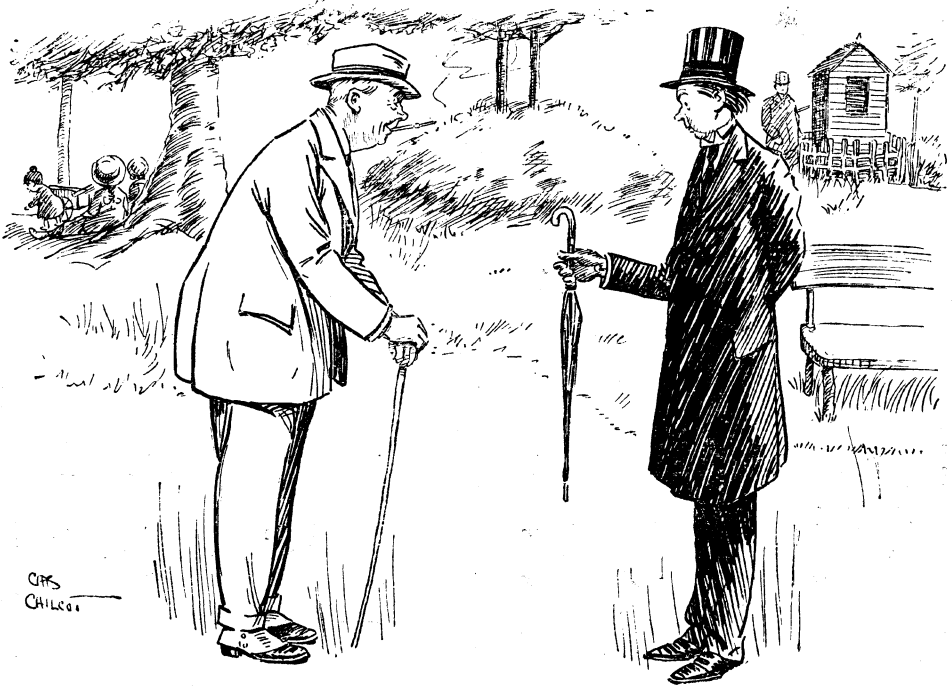
Not, as a matter of fact, that she was a princess by birth. She merely holds the title *ex-officio* as the heroine of a fairy story. Besides, I could hardly expect you to take an interest in her if I just made her an ordinary person, could I? An author mustn't take liberties with his readers.

"He cometh not," she said. "I am a-weary.

forth. Her name had been upon his lips. The heels of the socks she had knitted for him had been half-way up his legs. He had turned at the corner and waved. And then she had never seen him again. Youth had faded, the puppy he had given her had died of old age, the canary had moulted, but still he came not. Only hope survived.

From time to time news of him had come to her. He had been seen in Surbiton, heard of in Homerton, detected in Turnham Green. Rumours of him had come from Romford, tales from Tooting, picture postcards from Peckham Rye. But ever the quest had carried him onward away from her.

It was too bad, and at the thought the Princess began to weep, silently, so as not to disturb the neighbours. Day after day sat she



CPS
CHILDS

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

"I've had this umbrella twenty years."
"Then it's time you returned it."

I would he would get a jerk on, perdie." And her thoughts went wandering back to the Prince, whom she had not seen for so long. She thought again of his wooing. Once more she heard him say, "Wilt walk out, wench?" and heard her own reply, "What will father say?"

As it happened, he had said, "Thank Heaven, that's one of them!" for he had six daughters and no War bonus. Otherwise he was as nice a man as anyone could wish to meet.

Ah, Love's young dream is "some" vision, but for her it had ended all too soon. The great quest had called him away—the quest on which her father had insisted as a proof of his worthiness.

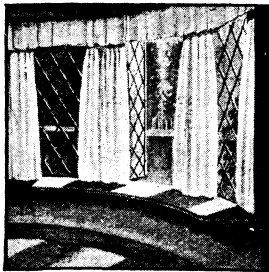
She remembered how gaily he had fared

thus in sorrow, while the house grew damper and damper, and the landlord refused to do anything about it.

But at last there came a day when eager footsteps sounded on the stairs, a glad voice called her name, the door was flung open, the cat kicked out of sheer gladness of heart—and out of the window also—the chiffonier—In short, the Prince turned up.

A moment, and she was in his arms. Several more moments, and, with a lithe movement of his body, he detached the identity disk from his breastbone, in which the fervour of her embrace had embedded it, and said—

"Darling, the quest is ended. I have found a flat."



The Sunlight's searching rays Reflect the truth that never fades in "AMBEROSE" Sunproof Fabrics.

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APOLOGY.

We desire to express our regret to Mr. P. A. Hay for infringing his copyright by publication of reproduction of his picture "A Hundred Years Ago," as advertisements of Erasmic Soap, on the back page of the March issue of *The Windsor Magazine*.

When we caused these reproductions to be made we sincerely thought that the copyright of the picture was vested in the owner of the picture from whom we obtained the right to reproduce it. The infringement of the copyright was, therefore, absolutely innocent and unintentional on our part.

We recognise, however, that the matter has naturally caused some annoyance to Mr. Hay, to whom we tender this sincere expression of regret. We are glad to say that the matter has now been amicably arranged.

We also very much regret that by inadvertence Mr. P. A. Hay's name at the foot of the picture appeared as "P. A. May," and we are glad to take this opportunity of offering so well-known an artist as Mr. Hay our apology for this mistake, and our regret that he should have been annoyed by it.

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(Signed) E. W. WARREN,
Secretary.

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And now it was for joy that the Princess wept—not, of course, that that lessened the dampness of the house.

"Darby and Joan" was the heading that the local paper gave to the report of the wedding, but they did not care. They were together at last.

T. Hodgkinson.



An editor recently became engaged, and this is how he became disengaged:

"I'll write to you while you are away, dearest," she murmured.

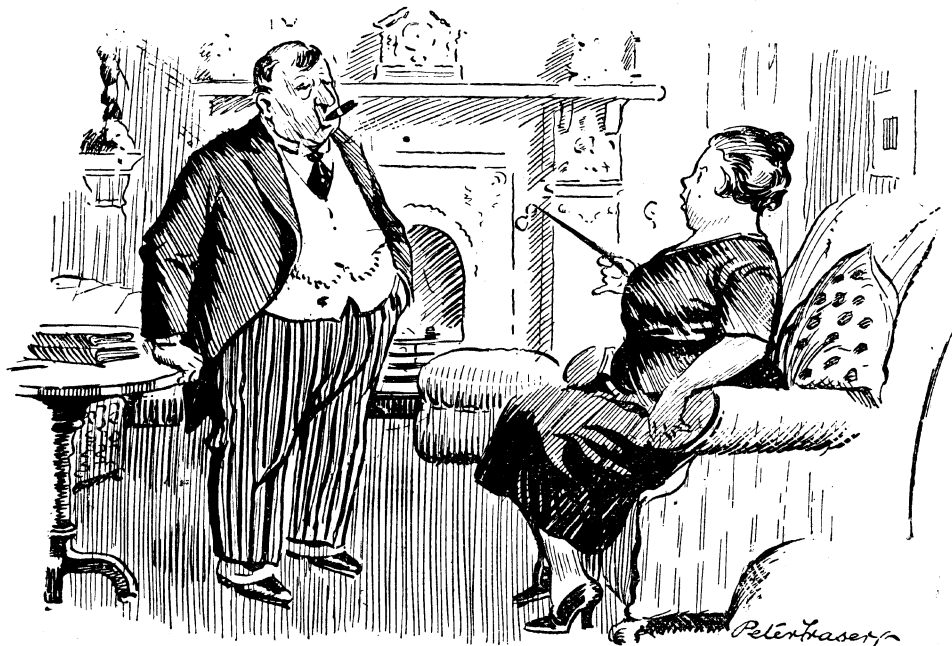
"Do, by all means," he replied absently, "but kindly write on one side of the paper only, and enclose stamped envelope for return in case of unsuitability."

I heard dad say, "Now, Mr. Brown,
Give three coats to the fence."

Dad doesn't know his truly-name
Is Mr. Impudence.

I know, for Jane told me again,
And laughed aloud in glee
When I said, "Mr. Impudence,
Do talk to Jane and me."

Long ladders dig our pansy beds:
Big paint pots spoil our grass.
I stepped in one, and just for fun
I smeared my face—alas!
I've found a piece of putty, nice
And soft as it can be;
We've put it in the butter-ice
To harden—Jane and me!



TOO PROFESSIONAL.

MRS. AMPLEBRASS: William, you really oughtn't ter talk in company about Schumann an' Schubert an' sich-like—people will think you works in a music shop.

WHAT BUNTY THOUGHT OF THE PAINTERS.

We're having lovely times at home;
We've got the painters there.
Inside and out, and round about,
They seem just everywhere.
And father groans and mother sighs,
Our pussies quite agree:
They hate the mess and muddle. But
We like it—Jane and me!

There's such a turpentiney smell;
In every room it lingers.
'Tis on each dress that I possess,
Jane's got it on her fingers.
The painter-men are all so kind,
For, while we had our tea,
I saw one lift the window-blind
To smile at Jane and me.

It's lovely, having painters here!
But daddy says it's plain
He'll never have the house "done down"
Till Doomsday comes again.
And when they finish, Friday night,
He'll sing "Land of the Free."
Mum says she'll dance for pure delight.
But we shan't—Jane and me!

Fay Inchfawn,
Author of "Homely Verses of a Home-Lover."



"Look, there goes Mrs. Newfangle, wearing
an Egyptian hat!"
"Why Egyptian?"
"Oh, it looks as if it had been buried and
dug up again."

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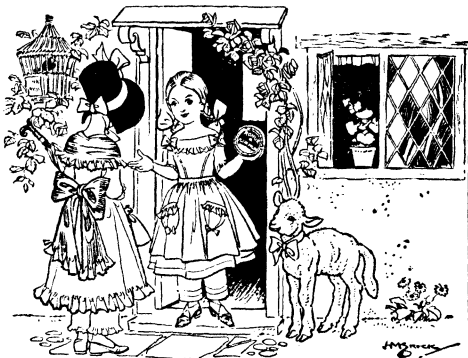
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Its floors were clean and bright,
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You saw reflected light.
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They only took a bit—
And every where that Mary went
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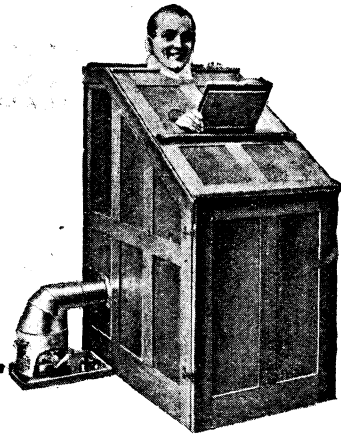
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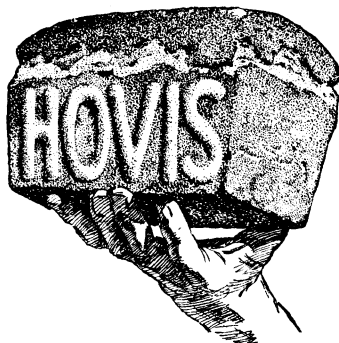
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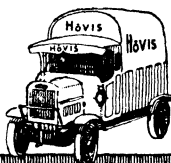
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SALMON ODY SPIRAL SPRING ARCH SUPPORT.

All Sizes. **15/6** per pair.

Prescribed by eminent Medical Men.

SALMON ODY Ltd., 7, New Oxford St., London, W.C.1

(Established 120 years.)

TOWLE'S VITALIQUE TONIC

—The best Tonic for sufferers from—
Anæmia, Lassitude, Palpitation, Nervousness.

This Tonic acts as a **Nourishing Food** to the Nervous System, and produces a fine healthy colour to the skin.

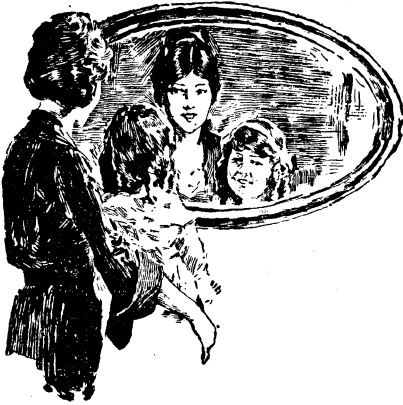
3/6 BOTTLE, POST FREE

E. T. TOWLE & CO., Ltd.,
69, Long Row, Nottingham. Established 1826.

STAMMERING

To Stammer is to appear ridiculous; to fail to express what you wish to convey; to appear stupid when perhaps your brain is better than those who have **fluent speech** and talk nonsense. If you stammer or stutter you can be **cured quickly and permanently** by a simple private home method, without long correspondence tuition. Full particulars and booklet, "**The Perfect Voice**," sent free privately if you send 2d. stamp for postage and mention "**WINDSOR MAGAZINE**."

W. R. BURTON, 27a, The Square, St. Anne's-on-Sea.



Not Nice

That dingy film on teeth

Millions now combat it

You see to-day white glistening teeth—teeth that look clean and safe. And you see dingy teeth.

Let us show you where the difference lies. See what a change can come in a week. Ask for this ten-day test.

Combat the film

Film is what makes teeth cloudy, and film may seriously affect them.

Film is the viscous coat you feel. It clings to teeth, enters crevices and remains. Food stains, etc., discolour it. Then it forms dingy coats. Tartar is based on film.

Film also holds food substance which ferments and

forms acids. It holds the acids in contact with the teeth—the acids may cause decay.

It is curdled

Dental science, after long research, has found ways to fight that film. One acts to curdle it, one to remove it, and without any harmful scouring.

Able authorities proved these methods. Then a new type tooth paste was created, based on modern research. These two great film combatants have come to millions by it.

That tooth paste is called Pepsodent. Careful people

Avoid Harmful Grit

Pepsodent curdles the film and removes it without harmful scouring. Its polishing agent is far softer than enamel. Never use a film combatant which contains harsh grit.

of some 50 nations now employ it, largely by dental advice. New beauty and new safety have come to millions by it.

Manifold power

Pepsodent also gives manifold power to Nature's tooth-protecting agents. It multiplies the alkalinity of the saliva, to neutralize mouth acids which may cause tooth decay.

It multiplies the starch digestant in the saliva. That is there to digest starch deposits which may otherwise ferment and form acids. Thus, night and day, tooth enemies are fought as they never were before.

A delightful test

Send the coupon for a 10-Day Tube. Note how clean the teeth feel after using. Mark the absence of the viscous film. See how teeth whiten as the film-coats disappear.

Then you will know how to beautify your teeth. You will know how to better protect them. This is too important to neglect. Cut out the coupon now.

Pepsodent

The New-Day Dentifrice

A scientific film combatant which whitens, cleans, and protects the teeth without use of harmful grit.

Sold in two sizes—1/3 and 2/-.

Colonial Addresses:—

S. Africa: P.O. Box 6824, Johannesburg.
Australia: 137, Clarence St., Sydney, N.S.W.
New Zealand: 31, Hunter Street, Wellington.
Readers resident in these countries may send coupon to above branches.

10-DAY TUBE FREE.

1109

THE PEPSODENT COMPANY,
(Dept. 156), 42, Southwark Bridge Rd., London, S.E.1

Mail 10-Day Tube of Pepsodent to—

Name

Address

Give full address. Write plainly.
Only one tube to a family.

Windsor Mag., May, 1923

The "ADAPTA" Bed-Table



A
MODERN
COMFORT

Can be instantly raised, lowered, or inclined. It extends over bed, couch, or chair, without touching it, and is the ideal Table for reading or taking meals in bed with ease and comfort. By pressing a button the top can be adjusted to various inclinations. It cannot over-balance. Comprises Bed-Table, Reading Stand, Writing Table, Bed Rest, Card Table, &c. British made.

- (Patented.)
- No. 1.—Enamelled Metal Parts, with Polished Wood Top ... £3 3 0
 - No. 3.—Ditto, with Adjustable Side Tray, Automatic Book Holders, and Polished Oak Top (as illustrated) ... £5 0 0
 - No. 5.—Complete as No. 3, but with Detachable Candle Sconce, and all Metal Parts finished Polished Brass ... £7 7 0
- Carriage Paid in Great Britain. Write for Booklet A5.

J. FOOT & SON, Ltd.,
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HIMROD'S ASTHMA CURE

The Standard Remedy For Over 50 Years
Surest and quickest remedy for Catarrh, Ordinary Colds and Asthmatic Troubles. At all Chemists. 4s 6d. a tin.



UGLY NOSES

NOSES.—The only patent Nose Machines in the World. Improve ugly noses of all kinds. Scientific yet simple. Can be worn during sleep.

RED NOSES.—My long-established medically approved Treatment absolutely cures red noses. 4/- post free. Foreign 1/8 extra.

D. LEES RAY,

10 E. CENTRAL CHAMBERS, LIVERPOOL.

Foster Clark's Cream Custard

IT'S THE
CREAMIEST
CUSTARD

Reduced Prices.
Family Tins 11½d.,
Packets 9½d.,
Small Packets, 4d.,
1½d. 1d.

CASH'S Silk Brocaded WASH RIBBONS

Durable, Dainty and Distinctive



For use as trimmings, shoulder straps to lingerie, on children's clothes and overalls, etc., etc. Need not be removed before sending to the laundry.

COLOURS:
White, Blue, Pink,
Heliotrope and
Maize.

PRICES per dozen yards.

3/16 in. 2/- 7/16 in. 3/- 1 in. 5/10

COLOURS FAST TO WASHING.

Ask your draper for
CASH'S WASH RIBBONS.

PATTERNS FREE on application to
the Sole Manufacturers—

J. & J. CASH, Ltd.

(Dept. F. 6), COVENTRY.



DELICIOUS FRENCH COFFEE

RED WHITE & BLUE

For Breakfast & after Dinner.

In making, use LESS QUANTITY, it being
much stronger than ORDINARY COFFEE

INVALID FURNITURE

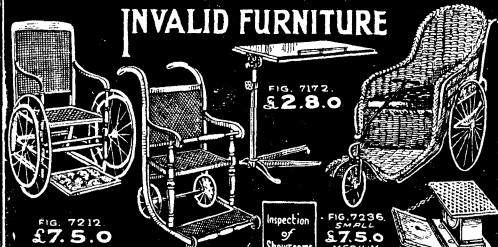


FIG. 7212
£7.5.0

FIG. 7192
£2.8.0

FIG. 7236
£7.5.0
£8.1.0
£10.5.0

FIG. 506
£1.15.0

Write for
ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE.
The SURGICAL MANUFACTURING CO. LTD
83/85 MORTIMER ST., LONDON, W. 1.



Superfluous hair instantly removed without razors or noxious irritating chemicals

A razor only stimulates the growth of hair just as trimming a hedge makes it grow faster and thicker. The burning Barium Sulphide used in depilatories often causes red blotches, painful irritation, soreness and skin blemishes. Veet does not contain any Barium Sulphide or other poisonous chemicals. Whereas razors and ordinary depilatories simply remove hair *above* the skin surface, Veet melts the hair away *beneath* it. Veet will not encourage the growth of hair and has no offensive odour. It is as easy and pleasant to use as a face cream. You simply spread Veet on just as it comes from the tube, wait a few minutes, rinse it off, and every sign of hair is gone as if by magic.

Veet is guaranteed to give entirely satisfactory results in every case or your money is returned.

Veet may be obtained from all chemists, hair-dressers and stores for 3/6, or it is sent direct by post, in plain wrapper to ensure privacy, upon receipt of 3/6 plus 6d. for postage and packing (Trial size 6d). Address: Dae Health Laboratories (Dept. 51D), 68, Bolsover Street, London, W.1.

VEET



"Walls are a picture in themselves" when decorated with Hall's Distemper.

The inside quality gives the most delicate interior effects and makes home sweet home with beautiful sun-proof washable walls. The outside quality is fully weather resisting; it sets hard as cement and withstands rain, sun and frost.

Hall's Distemper

is sold by the Trade.

Sole Manufacturers: Sissons Brothers & Co. Ltd., HULL & LONDON.



By Appointment
to H.M. The King.



*Children, where a
Night-light glows.
have pleasant dreams
and sweet repose*

**PRICE'S
NIGHT LIGHTS**

**burn
that
brush**

"HARPIC"

**Makes 'W.C' bowls
spotless in a night**

No scouring or dirty brushes, no dangerous chemicals. Just a sprinkle of Harpic at night and a flush in the morning. Harpic removes all stains and encrustations, leaving the bowl spotless. Harpic does all the work alone and it's so cheap. A 6d. tin will do many cleanings, while a 1/5 tin is even more economical.

Cleans 'W.C' bowls in a Night!



This is perfectly true of Harpic. Try it to-day—you'll never be without it again—and Burn that Dirty Brush. Of all Chemists, Ironmongers, Grocers and Oilmen, Boot's Branches, and all large stores. If your dealer cannot supply, send his name and address, we will send you a sample tin free.

Dept. "M," Harpic Mfg. Co.,
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**Write for 100
Cloth Patterns**

and descriptive catalogue of Guaranteed perfect system of To-measure Tailoring By Post. Only best British Cloths used. Lounge Suits of pure wool Tweed. Starting price for

The Suit is £3-18-0

34-yd. Suit Lengths from 24/6; per yd. 7/-

**GROVES & LINDLEY,
106, The Lion, Huddersfield**



**WHY BE TOO FAT?
REGAIN YOUR HEALTH
AND BEAUTY**

and reduce your weight quickly by commencing the never-failing ANTIPON treatment NOW. It has 20 years' reputation, and is the only safe, sure and pleasant remedy for over-stoutness. No change of diet, but a reduction of 80% to 3lb. in a single day and night. Sold in powder and liquid form by Boots (and Branches), and all Chemists and Stores the world over. Price 3/- and 5/-; or powder form in plain wrapper, post free from THE ANTIPON CO. (Dept. No. 5), 27, Store Street, London, W.C. 1.

Antipon

3/-, 5/-, POWDER OR LIQUID.



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CHEMIST
SELLS
IT

BE TALLER.

IT PAYS TO BE TALL.

Short people are snubbed and overlooked. By my simple private method you can add several inches to your height without violent exercises, without apparatus. No risk or strain. Full particulars free if you write at once and mention Windsor (May). Address: J. W. EDISON, 51, Church St., South Shore, Blackpool.

15,000,000 SATISFIED USERS.

The Best & Cheapest Light, 400 C.P.
Petrol Gas 30/- per annum, compared with 28/- for Paraffin.
Adopted by U.S. Government

Write for List to
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London, E. 6.

Show room: 357, Oxford St. (1st Floor), W.1.
Trade Enquiries, 56, Warton Road, London, E. 15.

No. P. 71. Table Lamp



No. 235. Lantern.

Don't neglect your Hair

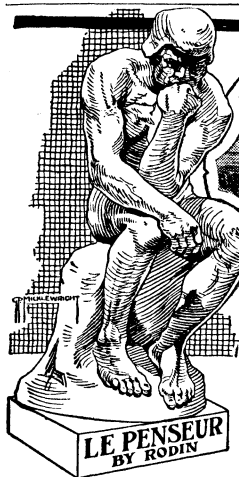
**USE
KOKO
for the
HAIR**

Has 35 Years Reputation.

1/6, 3/- & 5/6 per bottle.

OF ALL CHEMISTS & STORES.

KOKO MARICOPAS Co., Ltd., 16, Bevis Marks, London, E.C. 5



The THINKER

Add a cubit to *your* business stature by taking thought now for the future — *map out a career for yourself*, and then push forward persistently, *via* Increasing Responsibility to High Remuneration.

The direct route to SUCCESS is plainly delineated in the "GUIDE TO CAREERS"

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SPECIALISED POSTAL TRAINING, TAKEN AT HOME, IN SPARE TIME.

A choice of scores of unrivalled courses in ACCOUNTANCY, SECRETARYSHIP, ADVERTISING, BANKING, INSURANCE, etc., is detailed in the "Guide," which has set thousands of feet on the path to Prosperity, and *you* can have a copy, to *keep*, for the mere asking. A postcard will do!

1,450 Students of the Metropolitan College were successful—31 gaining Honours—in the recognised Professional Accountancy and Secretarial Examinations of the past year alone.

METROPOLITAN COLLEGE,

Dept. W.M., ST. ALBANS.



Danger lurks in every Cut

If you neglect cuts and wounds you run a great risk of septic poisoning; or, at best, slow and painful healing. Always promptly treat them with

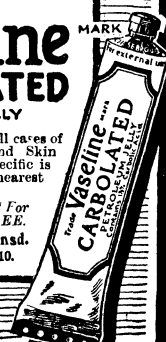
Vaseline

CARBULATED

PETROLEUM JELLY

The Antiseptic Salve. In all cases of Cuts, Burns, Wounds, and Skin Abrasions, this valuable specific is your safeguard. Your nearest Chemist will supply.

Write for New Booklet "For Health and Beauty" — FREE.
Chesebrough Mfg. Co., Censd.
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Demand Original Packages. In bottles at 9d., and in tubes 1/- and 2/-.

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JOHN BOND'S
"CRYSTAL PALACE"
MARKING INK
THE MARKS GROW BLACKER WITH TIME.
FOR USE WITH OR WITHOUT HEATING
(WHICHEVER KIND IS PREFERRED).
Of all Stationers, Chemists & Stores. 6d. & 1s.
Used in the Royal Households.



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TEST

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Why endure the misery of Headache or Neuralgia? You can get almost immediate relief with ZOX. **Two Zox Powders Free** if you mention this Journal and enclose 1d. stamped addressed envelope. ZOX Powders sold by Chemists and Stores in 1/6 and 3/- boxes, or if unobtainable locally, post free at these prices from **THE ZOX CO., 11, Hatton Garden, London, E.C.1**

HEADACHE & NEURALGIA

No Woman Loves a Weakling



STRONGFORT
The Perfect Man

At first she pities him—then she has contempt for him—next she cordially despises him, and finally she deserts him. How about you? Are you a weakling without sufficient courage left to approach a woman and ask her hand in marriage? Do you tremble to think what might happen in your home if you marry a lovely girl and she discovers that you are a physical weakling? You dare not marry and ruin some trusting girl's life if Youthful Errors and Excesses have sapped your vitality and left you a mere apology for a real man. It looks hopeless to you, but cheer up. I want to help you—I CAN HELP YOU.

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Mark the ailments on the Consultation Coupon on which you want Special confidential information and send with 2d. stamps to help pay postage on my free book, "Promotion and Conservation of Health, Strength and Mental Energy." It's a man builder and a life saver. Send for it Right Now.

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|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| ...Colds | ...Prostatitis | ...Youthful Errors |
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| ...Asthma | ...Pimples | ...Impotency |
| ...Hay Fever | ...Blackheads | ...Falling Hair |
| ...Obesity | ...Female Disorders | ...Weak Eyes |
| ...Headache | ...Insomnia | ...Gastritis |
| ...Thinness | ...Short Wind | ...Heart Weakness |
| ...Rupture | ...Flat Feet | ...Poor Circulation |
| ...Lumbago | ...Stomach Disorders | ...Skin Disorders |
| ...Neuritis | ...Constipation | ...Neurasthenia |
| ...Diabetes | ...Biliousness | ...Despondency |
| ...Neuralgia | ...Torpid Liver | ...Round Shoulders |
| ...Flat Chest | ...Indigestion | ...Lung Troubles |
| ...Deformity | ...Nervousness | ...Stoop Shoulders |
| (Describe) | ...Poor Memory | ...Muscular Development |
| ...Successful Marriage | ...Rheumatism | ...Great Strength |
| | ...Bad Blood | |

Name.....
Age..... Occupation.....
Adress.....

THE TREATMENT OF CONSUMPTION

1ST STAGE

is also a dangerous stage.

The Edwin Alabone Treatment has dealt with many thousands of cases in all stages of the disease, and can with confidence state that its experience, based upon over FORTY YEARS of Practice, is worth earnest consideration.

That the Dr. Alabone's Inhalation Treatment does destroy the morbid activity of the Bacterial Organisms is proved by the number of advanced cases that recover where other measures have failed, but cases in the FIRST STAGE respond rapidly, and results have been little short of miraculous, and hundreds who have undergone the treatment have been restored to their wonted health.

It will well repay those it concerns to write to the Secretary, The Edwin W. Alabone Treatment, Ltd., Lynton House, Highbury Quadrant, London, N.5, for full particulars and copies of recent convincing testimonials and Medical Opinions, which will be gladly forwarded, free of charge. Dr. Alabone's important book, "The Cure of Consumption, Asthma, Bronchitis, and other Diseases of the Chest," can also be obtained from the Secretary, price 3/6 post free.

BE TALLER

Height is of immense importance in business. It gains respect in private life, too.

Students of the Girvan Scientific Treatment report from 2 to 5 inches of increase, with great benefits to health. These advantages can be yours also if you are under 40. Over ten years' unblemished reputation. Send postcard to-day for particulars and our £100 guarantee to:—Enquiry Dept. D.M., 17, Stroud Green Road, London, N.4.

RHEUMATISM

Cured after a Life of Pain and Sleepless Nights.

Dear Sirs,—I had no sleep for months, and doctors told me there was no cure. Before I had taken Urace a fortnight I had sleep and rest, and was free from pain. Since taking Urace I have not lost one day's work through rheumatism.

Yours sincerely, MR. WILSON.
URACE and URACE alone, can cure Rheumatism. It directly attacks the cause—uric acid—dissolves and expels it from the system, and prevents its reappearance. That is why it CURES and CURES QUICKLY. 1/3, 3/4, and 5/- per box, from Boots, Timothy White & Co. Tailors, and all Chemists and Stores, or direct from the URACE Laboratories, 52, Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C.1.



URACE TABLETS

1/3, 3/4, and 5/- from Boots and all Chemists

A MARVELLOUS INVENTION FOR THE DEAF

WRITE TO-DAY FOR BOOKLET

Explaining how the Deaf can now hear.

It does not matter what the cause of your Deafness (unless you were born deaf), you can hear with this wonderful appliance as well as others.

Age is no barrier, nor the length of time you have been deaf. Mr. R. G. Smith, of Tottenham, was deaf for 24 years, and can now hear as well as anybody. We can give positive proof of hundreds of similar cases.

"The Murray Ear Drum" makes low sounds and whispers plainly heard. A miniature Telephone for the Ear—invisible, easily adjusted, and entirely comfortable. Thousands sold.

People affected with this distressing complaint are invited to write for valuable Booklet, fully descriptive of this wonderful and yet simple invention, which enables the deaf to hear, and also contains convincing proof of its efficacy from users in all stations of life. If you are deaf or know anybody who is deaf, write for this Booklet. It costs nothing; we send it free to anyone on receipt of stamp to pay postage.

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O-Cedar Mop Polish

Cheaper than ever—yet better.

The New Model O-Cedar Polish Mop has five distinct improvements, and is entirely British made.

The amount of labour saved if you do it the O-Cedar way is equal to an hour's work in ten minutes.

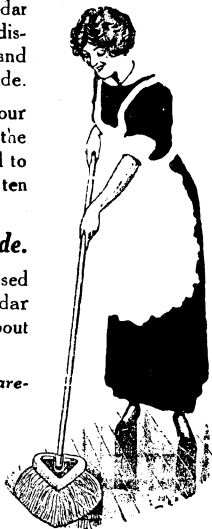
Entirely British Made.

Your dealer is authorised to guarantee all O-Cedar products. Ask him about them.

Of all Stores, Hardware-men, etc.

4/9 and 5/9

Manufacturers:
THE CHANNELL CHEMICAL CO., LTD.,
SLOUGH, BUCKS.



Foot Tortures

CORNS, CALLOUSES, BLISTERS.
Aching, Soreness, Swelling, Tenderness.

If you have these in any form and think there is the slightest excuse for continuing to suffer—Just read what the following users of

REUDEL BATH SALTRATES

say about the only quick, positive, and never-failing cure for sore, tired, tender feet that ache, burn, smart, swell, itch, and develop corns, bunions, callouses, or other forms of foot misery. Also, you can stop any rheumatic pains within ten minutes.

**PROMINENT USERS—SERIES IX.
ON THE STAGE.**



Miss **Phyllis Monkman**, the Musical Comedy Actress, writes:—

"It is wonderful for tired, tender, aching feet, or any other foot troubles. The medicated and oxygenated water has the same effect as that at famous spas."

Phyllis Monkman

Photo Weather & Buys.

Mr. **George Robey**, the imitable Comedian, writes:—

"I needed these Saltrates long before commencing to use them. Oh! How can I tell you my feelings in those days. Now, I have no more tired feet or muscular pain. Do I still travel to Continental Spas? No, NO—n' n' NO! I take my cure at home."

George Robey



Miss **Maldie Scott**, famous Music Hall Artist, writes:—

"I should advise all who dance much—and who does not nowadays?—to soak the feet daily in a bath to which a small quantity of Reudel Bath Saltrates has been added. They will then never know what it means to have tired, aching feet."

Maldie Scott



Photo Dobson.

Amongst other theatrical stars of the first magnitude who use and highly recommend Reudel Bath Saltrates are **Sir Harry Lauder, Harry Picer, Violet Loraine, Yvonne Arnaud, Lee White, Hetty King, Jock McKay, Daisy Dormer and May Moore Duprez.**

The Reudel Bath Saltrates compound exactly reproduces the highly medicated and oxygenated waters of celebrated curative springs. Prices: 2/- a half pound packet or 3/3 in the pound size. Obtainable from all chemists everywhere who are authorised to refund your money in full and without question if you are not satisfied with results.

HAVE YOU TRIED THE NEW STERILIZING SHAVING SOAP?

As you "rub it in" the lovely, creamy lather

renders harmless razor cuts or broken pimples, and neutralizes all air-borne infection. Recommended for all Shavers, especially for those with tender skins, easily scratched or anyone liable to Shaver's Rash. The powerful germicide with which the soap is compounded ensures skin health always. Buy one next time. Of all Chemists (in Blue Tins) 1/- per stick.

SEE THE NAME
"Culmak"
ON EVERY TIN



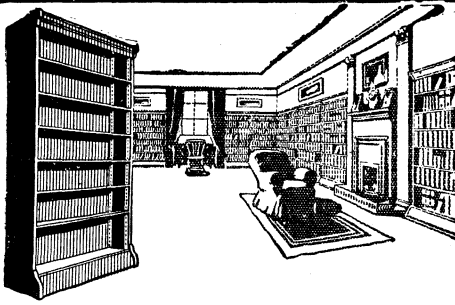
GIVES A LOVELY CREAMY LATHER

CULMAK SHAVING BRUSHES

The All-British "Culmak" Shaving Brush-de-Luxe is the only Shaving Brush ever awarded the certificate of the Incorporated Institute of Hygiene. Gives complete protection against Anthrax and all skin affections. Every Bristle is sterilized by a guarantee process. Handle of unbreakable non-porous "Celit" —also germ-proof.

Sizes and grades from 3/6 to 12/- each.

Apply to your local store. If sold out send P.O. to:
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Handsome Pine Bookcase

7 ft. 6 in. high, 3 ft. 2½ in. wide,
with 8 adjustable shelves 8 in. deep.

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Back, if required, £1 extra.
Packed free. Carriage paid.

Strong and rigid, easily erected, yet extensible. Further bays may be added at any time. An extension bay for the above bookcase, of the same dimensions, costs £4 3s. All shelves are adjustable to suit the height of your books.

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High Class Material and Exclusive Shades.
Patterns and Prices on application.

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State shade desired and if for Ladies' or Gents' Wear.

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The best GUIDE for small or big Poultry Keepers, Beginners and all interested in the management of Chickens, Ducks, etc., is

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POULTRY BOOK

By DR. HARRY ROBERTS

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Illustrated with nearly 50
Photographs. **2/6** net.

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and all Booksellers.



How Doctors Avoid Colds

A great Physician said he never had a Cold although constantly in the way of infection, simply because he KEPT HIS NOSE IN ORDER. Another prescribed inhaling antiseptics.

To avoid Colds and Influenza, use
Dr. MACKENZIE'S SMELLING BOTTLE

Of all Chemists & Stores 2/- or post free in U.K. for 2/3 (stamps)

Dr. Mackenzie's Arsenical Soap.

Ideal for the complexion.

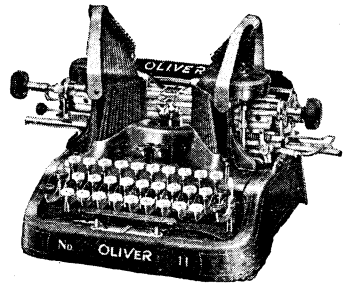
John Taylor's Oxygen Tooth Powder.

In tins 7½d., 1/3, 2/6 and 4/-.

DR. MACKENZIE'S LABORATORIES LTD., READING.

See the

OLIVER
First



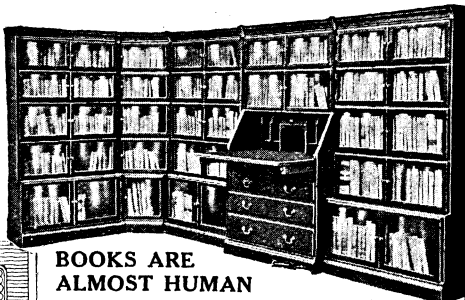
New Model No. 11 now Ready

The new Model No. 11 retains all the advantages which have made the Oliver famous for 26 years, and wherever typewriters are used. Now there is still greater speed, a more rapid escapement, a longer writing line, a lighter touch, a quicker response, and other striking improvements which will undoubtedly make the Oliver No. 11 the super-machine of the day. For full details and prices

Write for FREE Booklet.

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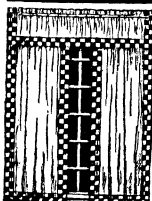
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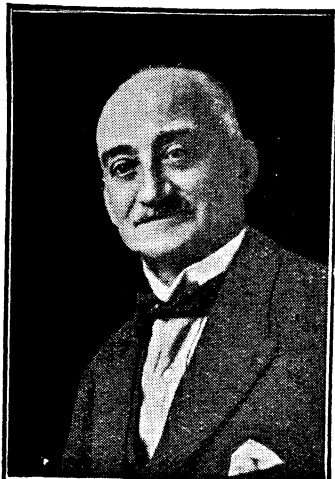
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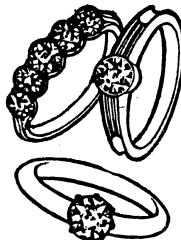
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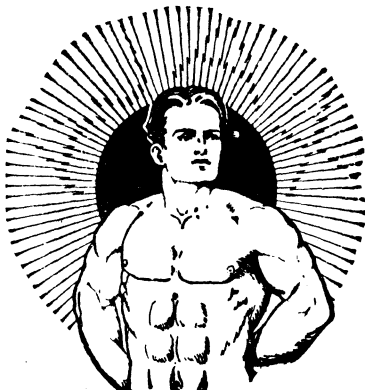
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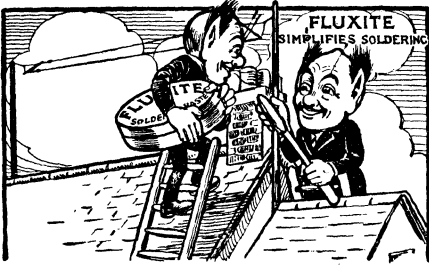
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The Windsor Magazine.

No. 341.

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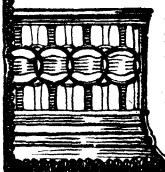
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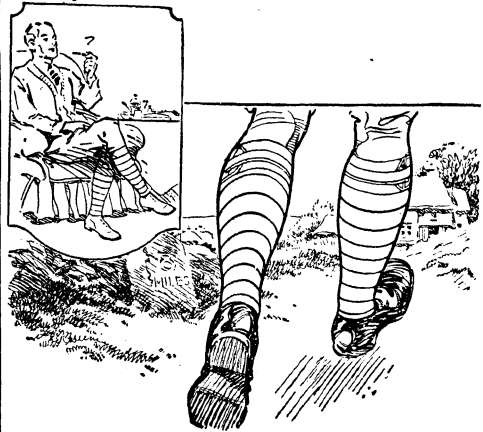
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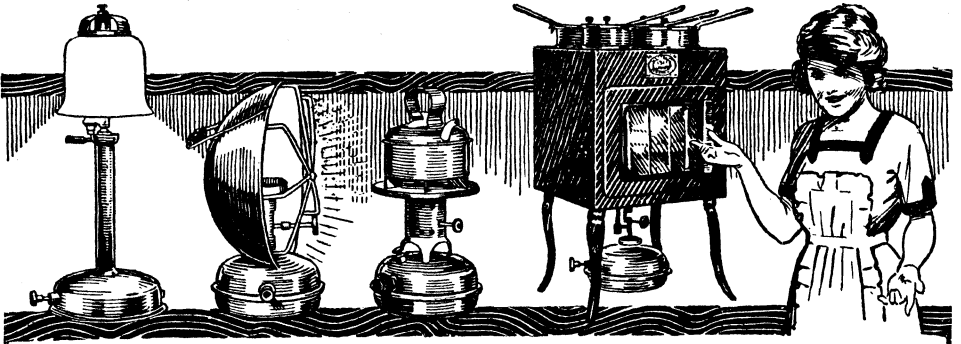
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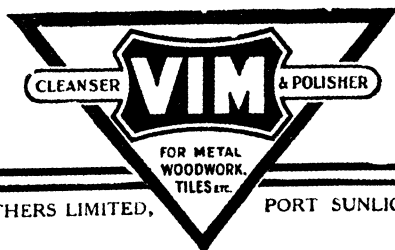
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